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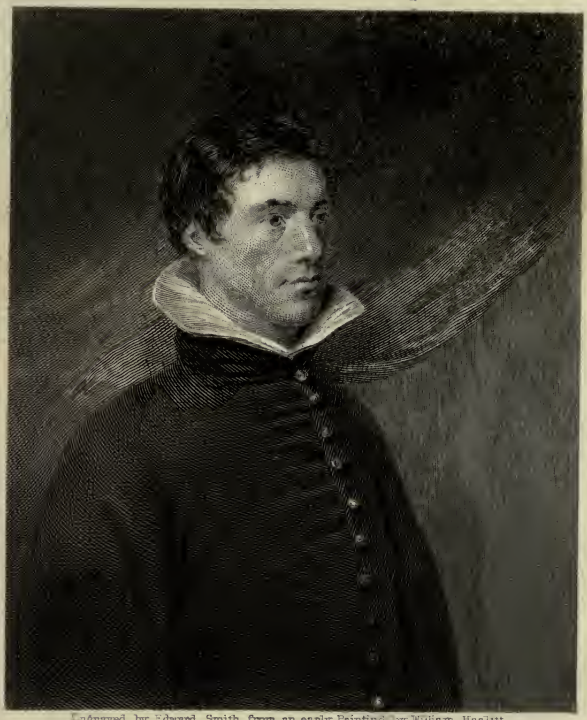
THE

LIFE, LETTERS AND WRITINGS

OF

CHARLES LAMB.



Engraved by Edward Smith, from an early Painting by William Hazlitt.

Yours truly

C Lamb

THE

LIFE, LETTERS, AND WRITINGS

OF

CHARLES LAMB.

EDITED, WITH NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., F.S.A.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

JOHN FORSTER, ESQ.

My Dear Forster,

To you who, when beginning your career, were Lamb's friend, I venture to inscribe this Edition of his Life and Writings. I may, at the same time, gratify myself by this small testimony of an affectionate regard, which has grown during a period of twenty years.

PERCY FITZGERALD.

THE EDITOR'S PREFACE.

In this edition will be found the Life, Letters and Writings of Charles Lamb, in a fuller and more complete shape than they have yet been presented to the reader.

To write a Life of Lamb might fittingly engage the most finished pen of our times, and would require the most delicate touch and the finest critical appreciation. Yet even were such forthcoming, the fragmentary Life written by Sir Thomas Talfourd would still hold its place as the work of one who had been Lamb's friend and companion, and was himself no indifferent writer. Though in parts a little inflated, its polished style will always please readers of taste; while the various painful episodes of Lamb's life are treated in excellent taste and even with art. The biographical realism, as it is called, of our time,—a realism which so largely affects painting and poetry,—seems to require as great a collection as possible of interesting and detailed facts. Treated on such principles the Life of Charles Lamb would leave a painful impression. Talfourd, his contemporary, was eminently suited for the task. In his hands all vulgar associations disappear. His style, too, reflects the literary tone of his day; and there is introduced

a strain of allusion to literary fashions and manners quite in keeping with the subject of his story. His carefully studied periods seem to harmonize with Lamb's almost fastidious style. The Memoir having thus become a sort of classic, it was essential to retain it, but under certain conditions now to be explained.

As is well known, it was issued in two portions—the first, in 1837, under the title of "Letters of Charles Lamb, *with a Sketch of his Life;*" the second, after an interval of eleven years, in 1848, under that of "Final Memorials of Charles Lamb; consisting chiefly of his Letters not before published, *with Sketches of some of his Companions.*" The reason for this delay, it is explained in the Preface, was the delicate motive of not entering on the tragic side of Lamb's life, so long as his sister was alive. Her death removed the difficulty, while the scruples of persons who objected to having the letters in their possession published had given way. The author then explained that he intended his second portion to be, not so much a sequel, as a supplement, and that he was careful not to go over any ground that had been covered in the first part. He added that he had wished to combine both parts into one whole, but that he had forborne "out of consideration for the purchasers of the early volumes." It will also be gathered from his second Preface that he was not at all content with the form of his work. Bearing this in mind, it did not seem improper to do what Talfourd

himself was inclined to have done, viz., combine the two portions of the Memoir in one, dismissing only such short paragraphs as had been introduced to form a framework, or introduction, for the letters. That these were of no value or interest will be seen at once; the following being fairly selected specimens :— "The next is a short but characteristic letter to Manning;" "Here is a specimen of Lamb's criticism on Southey's poetical communications;" or such a passage as: "Lamb then gives an account of his visit to an exhibition of snakes; of a frightful vividness and interesting, as all details of these fascinating reptiles are, whom we at once loathe and long to look upon, *as the old enemies and tempters of our race*." Further, the letters themselves that were selected by Talfourd, should in a properly arranged edition of the works form a separate department, and be placed with other letters that have since come to light.

Having thus retained the old Memoir, it was easy to see that in many points of view it was incomplete, and passed over much that was important. These defects I have tried to supply by an abundance of notes, in which have been collected, with at least diligence, everything important relating to Lamb. A great deal of what I have added is new, and all I hope will be found interesting.

Thus much for the Life. The Letters, as is well known, were edited by Serjeant Talfourd in accordance with his peculiar views; being cut up, altered, and dealt with in very summary fashion.

Many of the passages seem to have been suppressed, for no apparent reason: as, for instance, "A word of your healths will be richly acceptable;" "Love and respects to Edith." Others again are altered as offending the editor's fastidious taste: such as Lamb's humorous execrations—"damn him!" being always changed to "hang him!" or such a sentence as "gone sick and died and putrified," changed to "was buried;" while others, as the "Right Reverend tears of Earl Nelson," or "Hurra, boys! down with the Atheists!" are cautiously omitted. So careful was the editor, that where a name might be guessed from the initial, he substituted another, so as not to suppress merely, but to send the reader off on a wrong scent. Passages, too, where Lamb reproaches himself with little excesses in drink and extravagance, are also suppressed, such as "wasting away the little we have, which my wise conduct has already encroached on one-half;" and "Last Sunday, . . . inspired with new rum, I tumbled down and broke my nose." These are only a few specimens; for the whole was carried out in the most thorough fashion.

When some years ago a complete issue of the Correspondence was prepared, the letters were compared with the originals, and most of the suppressed passages restored; while the fragments of letters which the editor had divided, were brought together. I should have been glad to have collated them afresh; but, unfortunately, the originals have disappeared.

The present edition will be found the most com-

plete that has yet been offered to the public, and is certainly the first that has claims to being styled "edited." It contains forty new letters, besides some twenty more that have been collected from various sources. Many of these are of a very trifling kind—mere notelets, as they are called; but still all are characteristic, and offer some little turn of thought which the reader would not like to lose. I have been able also to discover a number of new pieces—dramatic criticisms from the *Examiner;* unsigned essays from Hone's Miscellanies; some fragments, and many pieces in verse. I must confess to a belief that in collecting the works of a great writer, some principle of selection should be observed; but in Lamb's case the public seems eager to possess every scrap that he wrote; and as the practice has steadily been observed of printing all that could be obtained of his work, the present edition might be thought incomplete if anything were omitted.

To the Essays and other papers notes have been added, explaining obscure allusions, and illustrating his life; thus, it is hoped, making these favourites more interesting still. Here, too, in the proper place, will be found all those curious variations and suppressed passages, which in some editions have been arbitrarily "restored," as it is called, in defiance of the author's wish. These notes are placed at the end of the volume, so that the reader may consult or pass them by as he is inclined. In every part I have tried to work in as reverent a spirit as possible. For the

notes marked F. the editor is responsible; those unsigned are by Sir T. Talfourd.

To my friend Mr. John Forster I am indebted for the twenty-five letters and "notelets," which are now first published in the Correspondence. To make the collection of Lamb's Letters complete seems to be impossible. A whole series addressed to Wordsworth remains unpublished. Each year brings to light a fresh contribution; and even, as I write, new Memoirs are announced, containing new letters. By the time, however, that this edition shall be completed, I hope to have arranged that nearly all the letters in print shall be included. Should this be found impossible, the *locale* of such letters will be indicated, so that the reader may, at least, know where to look for them.

A very full Index will be found at the end of the sixth volume. The characteristic Portrait, by Wm. Hazlitt, was selected by Serjeant Talfourd for his "Sketch of the Life, &c." It has, therefore, been adopted for the present edition.

P. F.

London, 37, St. George's Road.
November, 1875.

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF

CHARLES LAMB:

WITH

FINAL MEMORIALS.

BY

SIR THOMAS NOON TALFOURD, D.C.L.,

ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD

DEDICATIONS.

TO

MARY ANNE LAMB,

These Letters, the Memorials of many years which she spent with the writer in undivided affection; of the sorrows and the joys she shared, of the genius which she cherished, and of the excellences which she best knew; are respectfully and affectionately dedicated,

BY THE EDITOR.

TO

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, ESQ., D.C.L.,

POET LAUREATE,

These Final Memorials of one who cherished his friendship as a comfort amidst griefs and a glory amidst depressions, are, with affection and respect, inscribed by one whose pride is to have been in old time his earnest admirer, and one of whose fondest wishes is that he may be long spared to enjoy fame, rarely accorded to the living.

PREFACE

TO THE SKETCH OF THE LIFE, ETC.

THE share of the Editor in these volumes can scarcely be regarded too slightly. The successive publications of Lamb's works form almost the only events of his life which can be recorded; and upon these criticism has been nearly exhausted. Little, therefore, was necessary to accompany the Letters, except such thread of narrative as might connect them together; and such explanations as might render their allusions generally understood. The reader's gratitude for the pleasure which he will derive from these memorials of one of the most delightful of English writers is wholly due to his correspondents, who have kindly entrusted the precious relics to the care of the Editor, and have permitted them to be given to the world; and to Mr. Moxon, by whose interest and zeal they have been chiefly collected. He may be allowed to express his personal sense of the honour he has received in such a trust from men, some of whom are among the greatest of England's living authors,—to Wordsworth, Southey, Manning, Barton, Procter, Gilman, Patmore, Walter Wilson, Field, Robinson, Dyer, Cary, Ainsworth, to Mr. Green, the executor of

Coleridge, and to the surviving relatives of Hazlitt. He is also most grateful to Lamb's esteemed schoolfellow, Mr. Le Grice, for supplying an interesting part of his history. Of the few additional facts of Lamb's history, the chief have been supplied by Mr. Moxon, in whose welfare he took a most affectionate interest to the close of his life; and who has devoted some beautiful sonnets to his memory.

The recentness of the period of some of the letters has rendered it necessary to omit many portions of them, in which the humour and beauty are interwoven with personal references, which, although wholly free from anything which, rightly understood, could give pain to any human being, touch on subjects too sacred for public exposure. Some of the personal allusions which have been retained, may seem, perhaps, too free to a stranger; but they have been retained only in cases in which the Editor is well assured the parties would be rather gratified than displeased at seeing their names connected in life-like association with one so dear to their memories.

The italics and the capitals are invariably those indicated by the MSS. It is to be regretted that in the printed letters the reader must lose the curious varieties of writing with which the originals abound, and which are scrupulously adapted to the subjects.

Many letters yet remain unpublished, which will further illustrate the character of Mr. Lamb, but which must be reserved for a future time, when the Editor hopes to do more justice to his own sense of

the genius and the excellence of his friend, than it has been possible for him to accomplish in these volumes.

RUSSELL SQUARE, *26th June*, 1837.

Preface to "Final Memorials," London, July, 1848. —Nearly twelve years have elapsed since the Letters of Charles Lamb, accompanied by such slight sketch of his Life as might link them together, and explain the circumstances to which they refer, were given to the world. In the Preface to that work, reference was made to letters yet remaining unpublished, and to a period when a more complete estimate might be formed of the singular and delightful character of the writer than was there presented. That period has arrived. Several of his friends, who might possibly have felt a moment's pain at the publication of some of those effusions of kindness, in which they are sportively mentioned, have been removed by death; and the dismissal of the last, and to him the dearest of all, his sister, while it has brought to her the repose she sighed for ever since she lost him, has released his biographer from a difficulty which has hitherto prevented a due appreciation of some of his noblest qualities. Her most lamentable, but most innocent agency in the event which consigned her for life to his protection, forbade the introduction of any letter, or allusion to any incident, which might ever, in the long and dismal twilight of consciousness

which she endured, shock her by the recurrence of long past and terrible sorrows; and the same consideration for her induced the suppression of every passage which referred to the malady with which she was through life at intervals afflicted. Although her death had removed the objection to a reference to her intermittent suffering, it still left a momentous question, whether even then, when no relative remained to be affected by the disclosure, it would be right to unveil the dreadful calamity which marked one of its earliest visitations, and which, though known to most of those who were intimate with the surviving sufferers, had never been publicly associated with their history. When, however, I reflected that the truth, while in no wise affecting the gentle excellence of one of them, casts new and solemn lights on the character of the other; that while his frailties have received an ample share of that indulgence which he extended to all human weaknesses, their chief exciting cause has been hidden; that his moral strength and the extent of his self-sacrifice have been hitherto unknown to the world; I felt that to develope all which is essential to the just appreciation of his rare excellence, was due both to him and to the public. While I still hesitated as to the extent of disclosure needful for this purpose, my lingering doubts were removed by the appearance of a full statement of the melancholy event, with all the details capable of being collected from the newspapers of the time, in the *British Quarterly Review*, and the diffusion of the passage, extracted thence,

through several other journals. After this publication, no doubt could remain as to the propriety of publishing the letters of Lamb on this event, eminently exalting the characters of himself and his sister, and enabling the reader to judge of the sacrifice which followed it.

I have also availed myself of the opportunity of introducing some letters, the objection to publishing which has been obviated by the same great healer, Time; and of adding others which I deemed too trivial for the public eye, when the whole wealth of his letters lay before me, collected by Mr. Moxon from the distinguished correspondents of Lamb, who kindly responded to his request for permission to make the public sharers in their choice epistolary treasures. The appreciation which the letters already published, both in this country and in America—perhaps even more remarkable in America than in England—have attained, and the interest which the lightest fragments of Lamb's correspondence, which have accidentally appeared in other quarters, have excited, convince me that some letters which I withheld, as doubting their worthiness of the public eye, will not now be unwelcome. There is, indeed, scarcely a note—a *notelet*—(as he used to call his very little letters) Lamb ever wrote, which has not some tinge of that quaint sweetness, some hint of that peculiar union of kindness and whim which distinguish him from all other poets and humorists. I do not think the reader will complain that—with some very slight exceptions, which per-

sonal considerations still render necessary—I have made him a partaker of *all* the epistolary treasures which the generosity of Lamb's correspondents placed at Mr. Moxon's disposal.

When I first considered the materials of this work, I purposed to combine them with a new edition of the former volumes; but the consideration that such a course would be unjust to the possessors of those volumes induced me to present them to the public in a separate form. In accomplishing that object, I have felt the difficulty of connecting the letters so as to render their attendant circumstances intelligible, without falling into repetition of passages in the previous biography. My attempt has been to make these volumes subsidiary to the former, and yet complete in themselves; but I fear its imperfection will require much indulgence from the reader. The italics and capitals used in printing the letters are always those of the writer; and the little passages sometimes prefixed to letters, have been printed as in the originals.

In venturing to introduce some notices of Lamb's deceased companions, I have been impelled partly by a desire to explain any allusion in the letters which might be misunderstood by those who are not familiar with the fine vagaries of Lamb's affection, and partly by the hope of giving some faint notion of the entire circle with which Lamb is associated in the recollection of a few survivors.

T. N. T.

CHARLES LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

[1775 to 1796.]

Lamb's Parentage, School-days, and Youth.

Charles Lamb was born on 10th February,[1] 1775, in Crown Office Row,[2] in the Inner Temple, where he spent the first seven years of his life. His parents were in a humble station, but they were endued with sentiments and with manners which might well become the gentlest blood; and fortune, which had denied them wealth, enabled them to bestow on their children some of the happiest intellectual advantages which wealth ever confers. His father, Mr. John Lamb, who came up a little boy from Lincoln, fortunately both for himself and his master, entered into the service of Mr. Salt, one of the benchers of the Inner Temple, a widower, who, growing old within

[1] In his first edition, Talfourd gives the date as February 18th.—F.

[2] "On the ground floor, looking into Inner Temple Lane."—*Barron Field, Annual Obituary.*—F.

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its precincts, was enabled to appreciate and to reward his devotedness and intelligence; and to whom he became, in the language of his son, "his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his flapper, his guide, stop-watch, auditor, treasurer."[1] Although contented with his lot, and discharging its duties with the most patient assiduity, he was not without literary ambition; and having written some occasional verses to grace the festivities of a benefit society of which he was a member, was encouraged by his brother members to publish, in a thin quarto, "Poetical Pieces on several occasions." This volume contains a lively picture of the life of a lady's footman of the last century; the "History of Joseph," told in well-measured heroic couplets; and a pleasant piece, after the manner of "Gay's Fables," entitled the "Sparrow's Wedding," which was the author's favourite, and which, when he fell into the dotage of age, he delighted to hear Charles read.[2] His wife was a woman of appearance so matronly and commanding,

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[1] Lamb has given characters of his father (under the name of Lovel), and of Mr. Salt, in one of the most exquisite of all the Essays of Elia—"The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple."

[2] The following little poem, entitled "A Letter from a Child to its Grandmother," written by Mr. John Lamb for his eldest son, though possessing no merit beyond simplicity of expression, may show the manner in which he endeavoured to discharge his parental duties:—

"Dear Grandam,
Pray to God to bless
Your grandson dear, with happiness;
That, as I do advance each year,
I may be taught my God to fear;
My little frame from passion free,
To man's estate from infancy;

that, according to the recollection of one of Lamb's dearest schoolmates, "she might be taken for a sister of Mrs. Siddons." This excellent couple were blessed with three children, John, Mary,[1] and Charles; John being twelve and Mary ten years older than Charles. John, who is vividly described in the essay of Elia entitled "My Relations," under the name of James Elia, rose to fill a lucrative office in the South Sea House, and died a few years ago, having to the last fulfilled the affectionate injunction of Charles, "to keep the elder brother up in state." Mary (the Bridget of the same essay) still survives,[2] to mourn the severance of a life-long association, as free from every alloy of selfishness, as remarkable for moral beauty, as this world ever witnessed in brother and sister.

On the 9th of October, 1782, when Charles Lamb had attained the age of seven, he was presented to the school of Christ's Hospital,[3] by Timothy Yeates,

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From vice, that turns a youth aside,
And to have wisdom for my guide;
That I may neither lie nor swear,
But in the path of virtue steer;
My actions generous, firm, and just,
Be always faithful to my trust;
And thee the Lord will ever bless.
Your grandson dear,
JOHN L——, the Less."

[1] Mary-Anne was, properly speaking, her name.—F.

[2] Written in 1837.—F.

[3] Mr. Salt's interest was enough to secure this valuable privilege, though, as Talfourd says, he was presented by Timothy Yeates, one of the Governors of the Hospital. Lamb himself says the "Governor" who presented him resided "under the paternal roof," clearly pointing to Mr. Salt. The latter probably exerted his interest with Yeates. He

Governor, as "the son of John Lamb, scrivener, and Elizabeth his wife," and remained a scholar of that noble establishment till he had entered into his fifteenth year.[1]

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was admitted in a committee, on July 17th, 1782, "by a bond entered into by Samuel Salt, of the Inner Temple, London, Esquire." A petition had been sent in from his father, who set forth "that he had a wife and three children, and he finds it difficult to maintain and educate his family without some assistance." The admission was then merely formal, and he was not "clothed" as a Blue-coat boy until the 9th of October in the same year. I have been favoured with these extracts from the books of the Hospital, through the courtesy of the present Treasurer.—F.

[1] He was a sensitive child with a delicate temper, which seems to have been misunderstood or neglected by his parents. The eldest was the mother's favourite. "They loved pleasure, and parties, and visiting," he says in "Maria Howe;" "but as they found the tenor of my mind to be quite opposite, they gave themselves little trouble about me, but on such occasions left me to my choice, which was much oftener to stay at home, and indulge myself in my solitude, than join in their rambling visits." He found a friend in his old aunt, who was domiciled with them, and whom Mary long after thus recalled:—"My father had a sister lived with us—of course, lived with my Mother, her sister-in-law; they were, in their different ways, the best creatures in the world—but they set out wrong at first. They made each other miserable for full twenty years of their lives—my Mother was a perfect gentlewoman, my Aunty as unlike a gentlewoman as you can possibly imagine a good old woman to be; so that my dear Mother (who, though you do not know it, is always in my poor head and heart) used to distress and weary her with her incessant & unceasing attention and politeness, to gain her affection. The old woman could not return this in kind, and did not know what to make of it—thought it all deceit, and used to hate my Mother with a bitter hatred; which, of course, was soon returned with interest. A little frankness, and looking into each other's characters at first, would have spared all this, and they would have lived, as they died, fond of each other for the last few years of their lives. When we grew up and harmonized them a little, they sincerely loved each other."—*Letter of Mary Lamb*, given in Mr. Hazlitt's "Charles and Mary Lamb." This aunt clung to the

Small of stature, delicate of frame, and constitutionally nervous and timid, he would seem unfitted to encounter the discipline of a school formed to restrain some hundreds of lads in the heart of the metropolis, or to fight his way among them. But the sweetness of his disposition won him favour from all; and although the antique peculiarities of the school tinged his opening imagination, they did not sadden his

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child, saying, with some ungraciousness towards her hosts, it was the only thing in the world she loved. Her affection for the boy was constant—displayed when he was a wretched little sufferer from small-pox, when only five years old, at school, and later again under a terrible trial. But she unconsciously ministered to a diseased and morbid affection of his nature; and when actual derangement of mind came long after, it was easy to tell "when its first seeds were sown." "I was let grow up wild," he says, "like an ill-weed; and thrived accordingly. One night, that I had been terrified in my sleep with my imaginations, I got out of bed, and crept softly to the adjoining room. My room was next to where my aunt usually sat when she was alone. Into her room I crept for relief from my fears. The old lady was not yet retired to rest, but she was sitting with her eyes half open, half closed; her spectacles tottering upon her nose; her head nodding over her Prayer-book; her lips mumbling the words as she read them, or half read them, in her dozing posture; her grotesque appearance, her old-fashioned dress, resembling what I had seen in that fatal picture in Stackhouse. All this, with the time of night, joined to produce a wicked fancy in me; that the form which I beheld was not my aunt, but some witch. Her mumbling of her prayers confirmed me in this shocking idea. I had read in Glanvil of those wicked creatures reading their prayers *backwards;* and I thought that this was the operation which her lips were at this time employed about. Instead of flying to her friendly lap for that protection which I had so often experienced when I have been weak and timid, I shrunk back, terrified and bewildered to my bed, where I lay, in broken sleeps and miserable fancies, till the morning, which I had so much reason to wish for, came." From this morbid state he was rescued by a fortunate visit from his grandmamma, who carried him off to the country, down to Blakesmoor, where the change had the happiest effect. The good old lady had not

childhood. One of his schoolfellows, of whose genial qualities he has made affectionate mention in his "Recollections of Christ's Hospital," Charles V. Le Grice, now of Treriefe, near Penzance, has supplied me with some particulars of his school-days, for which friends of a later date will be grateful. "Lamb," says Mr. Le Grice, "was an amiable gentle boy, very sensible and keenly observing, indulged by his school-

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only Charles, but her other grandchild Mary, often down on a visit. Her room in the house was the haunted one. Her recollection of the place affected her in the same mysterious way as it did her brother. She had to attend on the austere old lady, who every morning used to nod her head very kindly, and say very graciously, "How do you do, little Mary?"

There is another episode connected with these early days which is passed over by Talfourd. Charles and his sister were sent to a day-school, situated in the mean passage that leads from Fetter Lane into Bartlett's Buildings, and looking into a discoloured, dingy garden. It was presided over by a Mr. William Bird, teacher of languages and mathematics, who was assisted by a strange being, called "Captain Starkey," later to become a character. This oddity wrote an account of his own life, which Lamb happened to stumble upon, and the name awakened all his and his sister's slumbering recollections of their school days. "This, then," he said, "was the Starkey of whom I have heard my sister relate so many pleasant anecdotes, and whom, never having seen, I almost seem to remember. Heaven knows what 'languages' were taught in it then! I am sure that neither my sister nor myself brought any out of it but a little of our native English. By 'mathematics,' reader, must be understood 'ciphering.' It was, in fact, an humble day-school, at which reading and writing were taught to us boys in the morning; and the slender erudition was communicated to the girls, our sisters, etc., in the evening." Mr. Moxon speaks of an old schoolmistress:—"Well we remember the veneration with which we used to look upon the old lady—for she remembered Goldsmith! He had once lent her his poems to read. We often lament that he did not give them to her; but the author of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' was poor."—F.

fellows and by his master on account of his infirmity of speech. His countenance was mild; his complexion clear brown, with an expression which might lead you to think he was of Jewish descent. His eyes were not each of the same colour, one was hazel, the other had specks of grey in the iris, mingled as we see red spots in the blood-stone. His step was plantigrade, which made his walk slow and peculiar, adding to the staid appearance of his figure. I never heard his name mentioned without the addition of Charles, although, as there was no other boy of the name of Lamb, the addition was unnecessary; but there was an implied kindness in it, and it was a proof that his gentle manners excited that kindness."

"His delicate frame and his difficulty of utterance, which was increased by agitation, unfitted him for joining in any boisterous sport. The description which he gives, in his 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital,' of the habits and feelings of the schoolboy, is a true one in general, but is more particularly a delineation of himself—the feelings were all in his own heart—the portrait was his own: 'While others were all fire and play, he stole along with all the self-concentration of a young monk.' These habits and feelings were awakened and cherished in him by peculiar circumstances: he had been born and bred in the Inner Temple; and his parents continued to reside there while he was at school, so that he passed from cloister to cloister, and this was all the change his young mind ever knew. On every half-holiday (and there were two in the week) in ten minutes he was in the gardens, on the terrace, or at the fountain of the Temple: here was his home, here his recreation; and the influence they had on his

infant mind is vividly shown in his description of the Old Benchers. He says, 'I was born and passed the first seven years of my life in the Temple:' he might have added, that here he passed a great portion of the second seven years of his life, a portion which mixed itself with all his habits and enjoyments, and gave a bias to the whole. Here he found a happy home, affectionate parents, and a sister who watched over him to the latest hour of his existence (God be with her!) with the tenderest solicitude; and here he had access to the library of Mr. Salt, one of the Benchers, to whose memory his pen has given, in return for this and greater favours—I do not think it extravagant to say—immortality. To use his own language, here he 'was tumbled into a spacious closet of good old English reading, where he browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage.' He applied these words to his sister; but there is no doubt they 'browsed' together; they had walked hand in hand from a time 'extending beyond the period of their memory.'"

When Lamb quitted school, he was in the lower division of the second class—which in the language of the school is termed "being in Greek Form, but not Deputy Grecian."[1] He had read Virgil, Sallust, Terence, selections from Lucian's Dialogues, and Xenophon; and had evinced considerable skill in the niceties of Latin composition, both in prose and verse. His docility and aptitude for the attainment of classical knowledge would have ensured him an exhibition; but to this the impediment in his speech

[1] His various friends, however—Leigh Hunt, Southey, and others—incline to think that he was a Deputy Grecian.—F.

proved an insuperable obstacle. The exhibitions were given under the implied, if not expressed, condition of entering into the Church; the whole course of education was preparatory to that end; and therefore Lamb, who was unfitted by nature for the clerical profession, was not adopted into the class which led to it, and quitted school to pursue the uncongenial labour of the "desk's dull wood." To this apparently hard lot he submitted with cheerfulness, and saw his schoolfellows of his own standing depart, one after another, for the University without a murmur. This acquiescence in his different fortune must have been a hard trial for the sweetness of his disposition; as he always, in after life, regarded the ancient seats of learning with the fondness of one who had been hardly divorced from them. He delighted, when other duties did not hinder, to pass his vacations in their neighbourhood, and indulge in that fancied association with them which he has so beautifully mirrored in his "Sonnet written at Cambridge." What worldly success can, indeed, ever compensate for the want of timely nurture beneath the shade of one of these venerable institutions—for the sense of antiquity shading, not checking, the joyous impulses of opening manhood—for the refinement and the grace there interfused into the long labour of ambitious study—for young friendships consecrated by the associations of long past time; and for liberal emulation, crowned by successes restrained from ungenerous and selfish pride by palpable symbols of the genius and the learning of ages?

On 23rd November, 1789, Lamb finally quitted Christ's Hospital for the abode of his parents, who still resided in the Temple. At first he was employed

in the South Sea House, under his brother John; but on the 5th April, 1792, he obtained an appointment in the Accountant's Office of the East India Company.[1] His salary, though then small, was a welcome addition to the scanty means of his parents; who now were unable, by their own exertions, to increase it, his mother being in ill health, which confined her to her bed, and his father sinking into dotage. On their comfort, however, this, and what was more precious to him, his little leisure, were freely bestowed; and his recreations were confined to a delightful visit to the two-shilling gallery of the theatre, in company with his sister, and an occasional supper with some of his schoolmates,[2] when in town, from Cambridge. On one of these latter occasions he obtained the appellation of *Guy*, by which he was always called among them; but of which few of his late friends heard till after his death. "In the first year of his clerkship," says Mr. Le Grice, in the communication with which he favoured me, "Lamb spent the evening of the 5th November with some of his former schoolfellows, who, being amused with the particularly large and flapping brim of his round hat, pinned it up on the sides in the form of a cocked-hat. Lamb made no alteration in it, but walked home in his usual sauntering gait towards the Temple. As he was going down Ludgate Hill, some gay young men, who seemed not to have passed the London Tavern without resting, exclaimed, 'The veritable Guy!—no man of straw!' and with this exclamation they took him up, making a chair with their arms, carried him, seated him on a

[1] "Through the influence, I believe, of Mr. Salt."—*Procter*.—F.

[2] Leigh Hunt, then at Christ's Hospital, recalls Lamb's occasional visits to the school.—F.

post in St. Paul's Churchyard, and there left him. This story Lamb told so seriously, that the truth of it was never doubted. He wore his three-cornered hat many evenings, and retained the name of Guy ever after. Like Nym, he quietly sympathised in the fun, and seemed to say, 'that was the humour of it.' A clergyman of the City lately wrote to me, 'I have no recollection of Lamb. There was a gentleman called Guy, to whom you once introduced me, and with whom I have occasionally interchanged nods for more than thirty years; but how is it that I never met Mr. Lamb? If I was ever introduced to him, I wonder that we never came in contact during my residence for ten years in Edmonton.' Imagine this gentleman's surprise when I informed him that his nods to Mr. Guy had been constantly reciprocated by Mr. Lamb!"

During these years Lamb's most frequent companion was James White, or rather, Jem White, as he always called him. Lamb always insisted that for hearty joyous humour, tinged with Shakesperean fancy, Jem never had an equal. "Jem White!" said he, to Mr. Le Grice, when they met for the last time, after many years' absence, at the Bell at Edmonton, in June, 1833, "there never was his like! We never shall see such days as those in which Jem flourished!" All that now remains of Jem is the celebration of the suppers which he gave the young chimney-sweepers in the Elia of his friend, and a thin duodecimo volume, which he published in 1796, under the title of the "Letters of Sir John Falstaff, with a dedication (printed in black letter) to Master Samuel Irelaunde," which those who knew Lamb at the time believed to be his. "White's Letters," said Lamb, in a letter to

a friend about this time, "are near publication. His frontispiece is a good conceit; Sir John learning to dance, to please Madam Page, in dress of doublet, etc., from the upper half, and modern pantaloons, with shoes of the eighteenth century, from the lower half, and the whole work is full of goodly quips and rare fancies, 'all deftly masked like hoar antiquity'—much superior to Dr. Kenrick's 'Falstaff's Wedding.'" The work was neglected, although Lamb exerted all the influence he subsequently acquired with more popular writers to obtain for it favourable notices, as will be seen from various passages in his letters. He stuck, however, gallantly by his favourite protégé; and even when he could little afford to disburse sixpence, he made a point of buying a copy of the book whenever he discovered one amidst the refuse of a bookseller's stall, and would present it to a friend in the hope of making a convert. He gave me one of these copies soon after I became acquainted with him, stating that he had purchased it in the morning for sixpence, and assuring me I should enjoy a rare treat in the perusal; but if I must confess the truth, the mask of quaintness was so closely worn, that it nearly concealed the humour. To Lamb it was, doubtless, vivified by the eye and voice of his old boon companion, forming to him an undying commentary; without which it was comparatively spiritless. Alas! how many even of his own most delicate fancies, rich as they are in feeling and in wisdom, will be lost to those who have not present to them the sweet broken accents, and the half playful, half melancholy smile of the writer![1]

[1] "Jem White" held an office in Christ's Hospital, and later, according to Mr. Procter, became a newspaper agent.—F.

But if Jem White was the companion of his lighter moods, the friend of his serious thoughts was a person of far nobler powers—Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was his good fortune to be the schoolfellow of that extraordinary man; and if no particular intimacy had been formed between them at Christ's Hospital, a foundation was there laid for a friendship to which the world is probably indebted for all that Lamb has added to its sources of pleasure. Junior to Coleridge by two years, and far inferior to him in all scholastic acquirements, Lamb had listened to the rich discourse of "the inspired charity-boy" with a wondering delight, pure from all envy, and, it may be, enhanced by his sense of his own feebleness and difficulty of expression. While Coleridge remained at the University, they met occasionally on his visits to London; and when he quitted it, and came to town, full of mantling hopes and glorious schemes, Lamb became his admiring disciple. The scene of these happy meetings was a little public-house, called the Salutation and Cat,[1] in the neighbourhood of Smithfield, where they used to sup, and remain long after they had "heard the chimes at midnight." There they discoursed of Bowles, who was the god of Coleridge's poetical idolatry, and of Burns and Cowper, who, of recent poets, in that season of comparative barrenness, had made the deepest impression on Lamb. There Coleridge talked of "Fate, free-

[1] The tavern still exists, much modernised, as the "Salutation" simply, at No. 17, Newgate Street. Coleridge's powers of conversation were here exhibited to such profit for the house, that the landlord is said to have offered him free quarters if he would stay and talk on.—F.

will, fore-knowledge absolute," to one who desired "to find no end" of the golden maze; and there he recited his early poems with that deep sweetness of intonation which sunk into the heart of his hearer. To these meetings Lamb was accustomed at all periods of his life to revert, as the season when his finer intellects were quickened into action. Shortly after they had terminated, with Coleridge's departure from London, he thus recalled them in a letter:[1] "When I read in your little volume your nineteenth effusion, or what you call 'the Sigh,' I think I hear *you* again. I imagine to myself the little smoky room at the Salutation and Cat, where we have sat together through the winter nights beguiling the cares of life with Poesy." This was early in 1796! and in 1818, when dedicating his works, then first collected, to his earliest friend, he thus spoke of the same meetings: "Some of the sonnets, which shall be carelessly turned over by the general reader, may happily awaken in you remembrances which I should be sorry should be ever totally extinct,—the memory 'of summer days and of delightful years,' even so far back as those old suppers at our old Inn,—when life was fresh, and topics exhaustless,—and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness." And so he talked of these unforgotten hours in that short interval during which death divided them!

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[1] This, and other passages I have interwoven with my own slender thread of narration, are from letters which I have thought either too personal for entire publication at present, or not of sufficient interest, in comparison with others, to occupy a portion of the space, to which the letters are limited.

The warmth of Coleridge's friendship supplied the quickening impulse to Lamb's genius; but the germ enfolding all its nice peculiarities lay ready for the influence, and expanded into forms and hues of its own. Lamb's earliest poetry was not a faint reflection of Coleridge's, such as the young lustre of original genius may cast on a polished and sensitive mind, to glow and tremble for a season, but was streaked with delicate yet distinct traits, which proved it an emanation from within. There was, indeed, little resemblance between the two, except in the affection which they bore towards each other. Coleridge's mind, not laden as yet with the spoils of all systems and of all times, glowed with the ardour of uncontrollable purpose, and thirsted for glorious achievement and universal knowledge. The imagination, which afterwards struggled gloriously but perhaps vainly to overmaster the stupendous clouds of German philosophies, breaking them into huge masses, and tinting them with heavenly hues, then shone through the simple articles of Unitarian faith, the graceful architecture of Hartley's theory, and the well-compacted chain by which Priestley and Edwards seemed to bind all things in necessary connection, as through transparencies of thought; and, finding no opposition worthy of its activity in this poor foreground of the mind, opened for itself a bright succession of fairy visions, which it sought to realize on earth. In its light, oppression and force seemed to vanish like the phantoms of a feverish dream; mankind were disposed in the picturesque groups of universal brotherhood; and, in far distance, the ladder which Jacob saw in solemn vision connected earth with heaven, "and the angels of God were

ascending and descending upon it."[1] Lamb had no sympathy with these radiant hopes, except as they were part of his friend. He clung to the realities of life; to things nearest to him, which the force of habit had made dear; and caught tremblingly hold of the past. He delighted, indeed, to hear Coleridge talk of the distant and future; to see the palm-trees wave, and the pyramids tower in the long perspective of his style; and to catch the prophetic notes of a universal harmony trembling in his voice; but the pleasure was only that of admiration unalloyed by envy, and of the generous pride of friendship. The tendency of his mind to detect the beautiful and good in surrounding things, to nestle rather than to roam, was cherished by all the circumstances of his boyish days. He had become familiar with the vestiges of antiquity, both in his school and in his home of the Temple; and these became dear to him in his serious and affectionate childhood. But, perhaps, more even than those external associations, the situation of his parents, as it was elevated and graced by their character, moulded his young thoughts to the holy habit of a liberal obedience, and unaspiring self-respect,

[1] This was the scheme of the "PANTISOCRASY," that strange ideal of communism which seriously engaged the thoughts of Coleridge and a band of ardent and clever youths. The story is naturally and agreeably told by Cottle the bookseller, who welcomed the young enthusiasts at Bristol, allowed himself to be patronised by them with an amiable simplicity, and accepted the publication of their rather immature compositions as a favour and an honour. Southey, Burnett, Lovell, Allen, and Coleridge, were the original spirits of the scheme; but as it became impossible to reach the Susquehanna without money, the enthusiasm soon cooled, and the sectaries fell away one by one.—See Cottle's *Reminiscences*, *passim*.—F.

which led rather to the embellishment of what was near than to the creation of visionary forms. He saw at home the daily beauty of a cheerful submission to a state bordering on the servile; he looked upward to his father's master, and the old Benchers who walked with him on the stately terrace, with a modest erectness of mind; and he saw in his own humble home how well the decencies of life could be maintained on slender means, by the exercise of generous principle. Another circumstance, akin to these, tended also to impart a tinge of venerableness to his early musings. His maternal grandmother was for many years housekeeper in the old and wealthy family of the Plumers of Hertfordshire, by whom she was held in true esteem; and his visits to their ancient mansion, where he had the free range of every apartment, gallery, and terraced-walk, gave him "a peep at the contrasting accidents of a great fortune," and an alliance with that gentility of soul, which to appreciate, is to share. He has beautifully recorded his own recollections of this place in the essay entitled "Blakesmoor in H——shire," in which he modestly vindicates his claim to partake in the associations of ancestry not his own, and shows the true value of high lineage by detecting the spirit of nobleness which breathes around it, for the enkindling of generous affections, not only in those who may boast of its possession, but in all who can feel its influences.

While the bias of the minds of Coleridge and Lamb thus essentially differed, it is singular that their opinions on religion, and on those philosophical questions which border on religious belief, and receive their colour from it, agreed, although probably derived from various sources. Both were Unitarians, ardent

admirers of the writings and character of Dr. Priestley, and both believers in necessity, according to Dr. Priestley's exposition, and in the inference which he drew from that doctrine respecting moral responsibility, and the ultimate destiny of the human race. The adoption of this creed arose in Lamb from the accident of education; he was brought up to receive and love it; and attended, when circumstances permitted, at the chapel at Hackney, of which Mr. Belsham, afterwards of Essex Street, was then the minister. It is remarkable that another of Lamb's most intimate friends, in whose conversation, next to that of Coleridge, he most delighted, Mr. Hazlitt, with whom he became acquainted at a subsequent time, and who came from a distant part of the country, was educated in the same faith. With Coleridge, whose early impressions were derived from the rites and services of the Church of England, Unitarianism was the result of a strong conviction; so strong, that with all the ardour of a convert, he sought to win proselytes to his chosen creed, and purposed to spend his days in preaching it. Neither of these young men, however, long continued to profess it. Lamb, in his maturer life, rarely alluded to matters of religious doctrine; and when he did so, evinced no sympathy with the professors of his once-loved creed. Hazlitt wrote to his father, who was a Unitarian minister at Wem, with honouring affection; and of his dissenting associates with respect, but he had obviously ceased to think or feel with them; and Coleridge's Remains indicate, what was well known to all who enjoyed the privilege of his conversation, that he not only reverted to a belief in the Trinitarian mysteries, but that he was accustomed to express as

much distaste for Unitarianism, and for the spirit of its more active advocates, as the benignity of his nature would allow him to feel for any human opinion honestly cherished. Perhaps this solitary approach to intolerance in the universality of Coleridge's mind arose from the disapproval with which he might justly regard his own pride of understanding, as excited in defence of the doctrines he had adopted. To him there was much of devotional thought to be violated, many reverential associations, intertwined with the moral being, to be rent away in the struggle of the intellect to grasp the doctrines which were alien to its nurture. But to Lamb these formed the simple creed of his childhood; and slender and barren as they seem, to those who are united in religious sympathy with the great body of their fellow-countrymen, they sufficed for affections which had so strong a tendency to find out resting-places for themselves as his. Those who only knew him in his latter days, and who feel that if ever the spirit of Christianity breathed through a human life, it breathed in his, will, nevertheless, trace with surprise the extraordinary vividness of impressions directly religious, and the self-jealousy with which he watched the cares and distractions of the world, which might efface them, in his first letters. If in a life of ungenial toil, diversified with frequent sorrow, the train of these solemn meditations was broken; if he was led, in the distractions and labours of his course, to cleave more closely to surrounding objects than those early aspirations promised; if, in his cravings after immediate sympathy, he rather sought to perpetuate the social circle which he charmed, than to expatiate in scenes of untried being; his pious feelings were only diverted,

not destroyed. The stream glided still, the undercurrent of thought sometimes breaking out in sallies which strangers did not understand, but always feeding and nourishing the most exquisite sweetness of disposition, and the most unobtrusive proofs of self-denying love.

While Lamb was enjoying habits of the closest intimacy with Coleridge in London, he was introduced by him to a young poet whose name has often been associated with his—Charles Lloyd—the son of a wealthy banker at Birmingham, who had recently cast off the trammels of the Society of Friends, and, smitten with the love of poetry, had become a student at the University of Cambridge. There he had been attracted to Coleridge by the fascination of his discourse;[1] and having been admitted to his regard, was introduced by him to Lamb. Lloyd was endeared both to Lamb and Coleridge by a very amiable disposition and a pensive cast of thought; but his intellect bore little resemblance to that of either. He wrote, indeed, pleasing verses with great facility—a facility fatal to excellence; but his mind was chiefly remarkable for the fine power of analysis which distinguishes his "London," and other of his later compositions. In this power of discriminating and distinguishing—carried to a pitch almost of painfulness—Lloyd has scarcely been equalled; and his poems, though rugged in point of versification, will be found by those who will read them with the calm attention they require, replete with critical and moral suggestions of the highest value. He and Coleridge were devoted wholly

[1] This, Southey says, is a mistake. Lloyd first met Coleridge at Bristol, and did not go to Cambridge till some years later.—F.

to literary pursuits; while Lamb's days were given to accounts, and only at snatches of time was he able to cultivate the faculty of which the society of Coleridge had made him imperfectly conscious.

Lamb's first compositions were in verse—produced slowly, at long intervals, and with self-distrust which the encouragements of Coleridge could not subdue. With the exception of a sonnet to Mrs. Siddons, whose acting, especially in the character of Lady Randolph, had made a deep impression upon him, they were exclusively personal. The longest and most elaborate is that beautiful piece of blank verse entitled "The Grandame," in which he so affectionately celebrates the virtues of the "antique world" of the aged housekeeper of Mr. Plumer. A youthful passion, which lasted only a few months, and which he afterwards attempted to regard lightly as a folly past, inspired a few sonnets of very delicate feeling and exquisite music. On the death of his parents, he felt himself called upon by duty to repay to his sister the solicitude with which she had watched over his infancy;—and well indeed he performed it! To her, from the age of twenty-one, he devoted his existence; seeking thenceforth no connection which could interfere with her supremacy in his affections, or impair his ability to sustain and comfort her.

CHAPTER II.

[1795-1798.]

INSANITY OF MARY LAMB.—EARLY POETIC EFFORTS.

IN the year 1795, Charles Lamb resided with his father, mother, and sister, in lodgings at No. 7, Little Queen-street, Holborn. The father was rapidly sinking into dotage; the mother suffered under an infirmity which deprived her of the use of her limbs; and the sister not only undertook the office of daily and nightly attendance on her mother, but sought to add by needle-work to their slender resources.[1] Their income then consisted of an annuity which Mr. Lamb the elder derived from the old Bencher, Mr. Salt, whom he had faithfully served for many years; Charles's salary, which, being that of a clerk of three years' standing in the India House, could have been but scanty; and a small payment made for board by an old maiden aunt, who resided with them. In this year Lamb, being just twenty years of age, began to write verses—partly incited by the example of his old friend, Coleridge, whom he regarded with as much reverence as affection, and partly inspired by an attachment to a young lady residing in the neigh-

[1] Southey thus describes their *ménage* in a letter to Moxon:—"When I saw the family (one evening only, and at that time), they were lodging somewhere near Lincoln's Inn, on the western side (I forget the street), and were evidently in uncomfortable circumstances. The father and mother were both living; and I have some dim recollection of the latter's invalid appearance. The father's senses had failed him before that time."—F.

bourhood of Islington, who is commemorated in his early verses as "the fair-haired maid." How his love prospered we cannot ascertain; but we know how nobly that love, and all hope of the earthly blessings attendant on such an affection, were resigned on the catastrophe which darkened the following year. In the meantime, his youth was lonely—rendered the more so by the recollection of the society of Coleridge, who had just left London—of Coleridge in the first bloom of life and genius, unshaded by the mysticism which it afterwards glorified—full of boundless ambition, love, and hope! There was a tendency to insanity in his family, which had been more than once developed in his sister; and it was no matter of surprise that in the dreariness of his solitude it fell upon him; and that, at the close of the year, he was subjected for a few weeks to the restraint of the insane.[1] The wonder is that, amidst all the difficulties, the sorrows, and the excitements of his succeeding forty years, it never recurred. Perhaps the true cause of this remarkable exemption—an exemption the more remarkable when his afflictions are considered in association with one single frailty—will be found in the sudden claim made on his moral and intellectual nature by a terrible exigency, and by his generous answer to that claim; so that a life of self-sacrifice was rewarded by the preservation of unclouded reason.

In the year 1796, Coleridge, having married,[2] and relinquished his splendid dream of emigration, was resident at Bristol. Lamb felt his absence from Lon-

[1] In his ravings he fancied that he was Young Norval—so Coleridge told Southey.—F.

[2] In the October of 1795.—F.

don bitterly, and sought a correspondence with him as, almost, his only comfort. "In your absence," he writes, in one of the earliest of his letters, "I feel a stupor that makes me indifferent to the hopes and fears of this life. A correspondence opening with you has roused me a little from my lethargy, and made me conscious of existence. Indulge me in it! I will not be very troublesome." And again, a few days after: "You are the only correspondent, and, I might add, the only friend, I have in the world. I go no-where, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech, and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society, and I am left alone. Coleridge, I devoutly wish that Fortune, which has made sport with you so long, may play one freak more, throw you into London, or some spot near it, and there snugify you for life." These appeals, it may well be believed, were not made in vain to one who delighted in the lavish communication of the riches of his own mind even to strangers; but none of the letters of Coleridge to Lamb have been preserved. He had just published his "Religious Musings," and the glittering enthusiasm of its language excited Lamb's pious feelings, almost to a degree of pain. "I dare not," says he of this poem, "criticise it. I like not to *select* any part where all is excellent. I can only admire and thank you for it, in the name of a lover of true poetry—

> 'Believe thou, O my soul,
> Life is a vision shadowy of truth;
> And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
> Shapes of a dream.'

I thank you for these lines in the name of a necessarian." To Priestley, Lamb repeatedly alludes as to

the object of their common admiration. "In reading your 'Religious Musings,'" says he, "I felt a transient superiority over you: I *have* seen Priestley. I love to see his name repeated in your writings;—I love and honour him almost profanely."[1]

It was in the spring of this year that Coleridge proposed the association of those first efforts of the young clerk in the India House, which he had prompted and praised, with his own, in a new edition of his Poems, to which Mr. Charles Lloyd also proposed to contribute.[2] Lamb's letters at this time are full of Sonnets transmitted to Coleridge for this purpose, accompanied by characteristic remarks. When later Coleridge became settled in his melancholy cottage, he invited Lamb to visit him, and the hope—the expectation—the disappointment, are all depicted in the various letters the latter sent to his friend. A little copy of verses, in which Lamb commemorated and softened his disappointment, bearing date (a most unusual circumstance with Lamb), 5th July, 1796, was inclosed in a letter of the following day, which refers to a scheme Coleridge had formed of settling in London on an invitation to share the

[1] Talfourd mentions "a poem" of Coleridge's as being "emulous of Southey's 'Joan of Arc,'" apparently ignorant that it was a contribution from Coleridge to his friend's poem.

[2] Talfourd does not appear to have known that Lamb's verses had already appeared, in company with those of Coleridge, in a little volume published at Bristol in 1796, entitled "Poems on Various Subjects," which is even more scarce than the one spoken of here. Place was given to three of Lamb's Sonnets, introduced with this handsome compliment:—"The effusions signed C. L. were written by Mr. Charles Lamb, of the India House. Independently of the signature, their superior merit would sufficiently have distinguished them."—F.

Editorship of the *Morning Chronicle*. The poem includes a lamentation over a fantastical loss—that of a draught of the Avon "which Shakespeare drank;" somewhat strangely confounding the Avon of Stratford with that of Bristol. It may be doubted whether Shakespeare knew the taste of the waves of one Avon more than of the other, or whether Lamb would not have found more kindred with the world's poet in a glass of sack, than in the water of either stream. Coleridge must have enjoyed the misplaced sentiment of his friend, for he was singularly destitute of sympathy with local associations, which he regarded as interfering with the pure and simple impression of great deeds or thoughts; denied a special interest to the Pass of Thermopylæ: and instead of subscribing to purchase "Shakespeare's House," would scarcely have admitted the peculiar sanctity of the spot which enshrines his ashes.

The autumn found Lamb engaged all the morning in task-work at the India House, and all the evening in attempting to amuse his father by playing cribbage; while Miss Lamb was worn down to a state of extreme nervous misery, by attention to needlework by day, and to her mother by night, until the insanity, which had been manifested more than once, broke out into frenzy, which, on Thursday, 22nd of September, proved fatal to her mother. The following account of the proceedings of the inquest, copied from the *Times* of Monday, 26th September, 1796, supplies the details of this terrible calamity, doubtless with accuracy, except that it would seem, from a letter of Lamb's to Coleridge, that *he*, and not the landlord, took the knife from the unconscious hand.

"On Friday afternoon, the coroner and a jury sat

on the body of a lady in the neighbourhood of Holborn, who died in consequence of a wound from her daughter the preceding day. It appeared, by the evidence adduced, that, while the family were preparing for dinner, the young lady seized a case-knife lying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice, round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and, with loud shrieks, approached her parent. The child, by her cries, quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart, on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with the fatal knife, and the old man, her father, weeping by her side, himself bleeding at the forehead from the effects of a severe blow he received from one of the forks she had been madly hurling about the room.

"For a few days prior to this, the family had observed some symptoms of insanity in her, which had so much increased on the Wednesday evening, that her brother, early the next morning, went to Dr. Pitcairn, but that gentleman was not at home.

"It seems the young lady had been once before deranged.

"The jury, of course, brought in their verdict—*Lunacy*."[1]

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[1] A statement nearly similar to this will be found in several other journals of the day, and in the Annual Register for the year. The *True Briton* adds:—"It appears she had been before, in the earlier part of her life, deranged, from the harassing fatigues of too much business. As her carriage towards her mother had always been affectionate in the extreme, it is believed her increased attachment to her, as her infirmities called for it by day and by night, caused her loss of

The following is Lamb's account of the event to Coleridge :—

"September 27th, 1796.

"My dearest Friend,—White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines :—My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses,—I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me 'the former things are passed away,' and I have something more to do than to feel.

"God Almighty have us well in his keeping.

"C. LAMB."

"Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please, but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you. "C. LAMB."[1]

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reason at this time. It has been stated in some of the morning papers that she has an insane brother in confinement; but this is without foundation." None of the accounts give the names of the sufferers; but in the index to the Annual Register, the anonymous account is referred to with Mrs. Lamb's name.

[1] In "The Old Familiar Faces" was originally inserted a stanza, which he suppressed later, as touching on terrible recollections.

"Where are they gone, the old familiar faces
I had a mother, but she died,
Died prematurely in a day of horrors."—F.

The anxieties of Lamb's new position were assuaged during the spring of 1797, by frequent communications with Coleridge respecting the anticipated volume, and by some additions to his own share in its pages. He was also cheered by the company of Lloyd, who, having resided for a few months with Coleridge, at Stowey, came to London in some perplexity as to his future course. Of this visit Lamb speaks in a letter, probably written in January. It contains some verses expressive of his delight at Lloyd's visit, which, although afterwards inserted in the volume, are well fitted to their frame-work of prose, and indicative of the feelings of the writer at this crisis of his life.

Poor Charles Lloyd! Delusions of the most melancholy kind thickened over his latter days—yet left his admirable intellect free for the finest processes of severe reasoning.[1] At a time when, like Cowper, he believed himself the especial subject of Divine wrath, he could bear his part in the most subtle disquisition on questions of religion, morals, and poetry, with the nicest accuracy of perception and the most exemplary candour; and, after an argument of hours, revert, with a faint smile, to his own despair!

As summer advanced, Lamb discerned a hope of compensation for the disappointment of last year, by

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[1] He had been already thus afflicted, when staying with Coleridge at Stowey. "I write under great agony of mind, Charles Lloyd being very ill. He has been seized with his fits three times in the space of seven days: and just as I was in bed last night, I was called up again; and from twelve o'clock at night to five this morning, he remained in one continued state of agonized delirium."—*Coleridge to Cottle.*—F.

a visit to Coleridge; and thus expressed his wishes:—"I discern a possibility of my paying you a visit next week. May I, can I, shall I, come as soon? Have you *room* for me, *leisure* for me, and are you all pretty well? Tell me all this honestly—immediately." The visit was enjoyed; and Lamb was once more left to the daily labours of the India House and the unceasing anxieties of his home.[1]

Soon after, death released his father from his state of imbecility and the son from his wearisome duties. With his life, the annuity he had derived from the old Bencher he had served so faithfully, ceased; while the aunt continued to linger still with Lamb in his cheerless lodging. His sister still remained in confinement in the asylum to which she had been consigned on her mother's death—perfectly sensible and calm,—and he was passionately desirous of obtaining her liberty. The surviving members of the family, especially his brother John,[2] who enjoyed a fair income in the South Sea House, opposed her discharge;—and painful doubts were suggested by the authorities of the parish, where the terrible occurrence happened, whether they were not bound to institute proceedings, which must have placed her for life at the disposition of the Crown, especially as no medical assurance could be given against the probable recur-

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[1] It took place in the first week in July, 1797, when the good-natured bookseller, Cottle, was invited to meet him, who, arriving later, heard Coleridge descant warmly and affectionately on the merits of his old schoolfellow.—F.

[2] "I do not retain an agreeable impression of him. If not rude, he was sometimes, indeed, generally, abrupt and unprepossessing in manner. He was assuredly deficient in that courtesy which usually springs from a mind at friendship with the world."—*Procter*.—F.

rence of dangerous frenzy. But Charles came to her deliverance; he satisfied all the parties who had power to oppose her release, by his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life; and he kept his word. Whether any communication with the Home Secretary occurred before her release, I have been unable to ascertain; it was the impression of Mr. Lloyd, from whom my own knowledge of the circumstances, which the letters do not ascertain, was derived, that a communication took place, on which a similar pledge was given; at all events, the result was, that she left the asylum and took up her abode for life with her brother Charles. For her sake, at the same time, he abandoned all thoughts of love and marriage; and with an income of scarcely more than £100 a-year, derived from his clerkship, aided for a little while by the old aunt's small annuity, set out on the journey of life at twenty-two years of age, cheerfully, with his beloved companion, endeared to him the more by her strange calamity, and the constant apprehension of a recurrence of the malady which had caused it! The illness of the poor old aunt brought on the confirmation of Lamb's fears respecting his sister's malady. After lingering a short time she died; but before this Miss Lamb's incessant attendance upon her produced a recurrence of insanity, and Lamb was obliged to place her under medical care, and was left alone to write letters full of misery to his friend.

It would seem that Lamb, at first, took a small lodging for his sister apart from his own—but soon to be for life united. His feelings on the recurrence of the season, which had, last year, been darkened by his terrible calamity, can be understood from the first

of two pieces of blank verse, which fill the two first sheets of a letter to Coleridge, written under an apprehension of some neglect on the part of his friend, which had its cause in no estrangement of Coleridge's affections, but in the vicissitudes of the imaginative philosopher's fortune, and the constancy of his day-dreamings. These were the verses entitled, "Written a Twelvemonth after the Events," and beginning :—

"Alas! how am I changed!"

and in which occurred these lines :—

"Thou and I, dear friend,
With filial recognition sweet, shall know
One day the face of our dear mother in heaven,
And her remember'd looks of love shall greet
With answering looks of love, her placid smiles
Meet with a smile as placid, and her hand
With drops of fondness wet, nor fear repulse."

In the margin of MS. he wrote, "This is almost literal from a letter of my sister's—less than a year ago."

And again :—

"O my companions! O ye loved names
Of friend, or playmate dear, gone are ye now.
Gone divers ways; to honour and credit some;
And some, I fear, to ignominy and shame!"

In the margin he added, "Alluding to some of my old play-fellows being, literally, 'on the town,' and some otherwise wretched.

Two months, though passed by Lamb in anxiety and labour, but cheered by Miss Lamb's continued possession of reason, so far restored the tone of his mind, that his interest in the volume which had been contemplated to introduce his first verses to the world,

in association with those of his friend, was enkindled anew. While cherishing the hope of reunion with his sister, and painfully wresting his leisure hours from poetry and Coleridge to amuse the dotage of his father, he watched over his own returning sense of enjoyment with a sort of holy jealousy, apprehensive lest he should forget too soon the terrible visitation of Heaven. It would seem that his acquaintance with the old English dramatists had just commenced with Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger.

A proposal by Coleridge to print Lamb's poems with a new edition of his own (an association in which Lloyd was ultimately included) occasioned reciprocal communications of each other's verses, and many questions of small alterations suggested and argued on both sides.

The volume which was to combine the early poetry of the three friends was not completed in the year 1796, and proceeded slowly through the press in the following year; Lamb occasionally submitting an additional sonnet, or correction of one already sent, to the judgment of Coleridge, and filling long letters with minute suggestions on Coleridge's share of the work, and high, but honest expressions of praise of particular images and thoughts. The eulogy is only interesting as indicative of the reverential feeling with which Lamb regarded the genius of Coleridge—but one or two specimens of the gentle rebuke which he ventured on, when the gorgeousness of Coleridge's language seemed to oppress his sense, are worthy of preservation. The following relates to a line in the noble Ode on the Departing Year, in which Coleridge had written of

> "Th' ethereal multitude,
> Whose purple locks with snow-white glories shone."

"'Purple locks, and snow-white glories;'—these are things the muse talks about when, to borrow H. Walpole's witty phrase, she is not finely-frenzied, only a little light-headed, that's all—'Purple-locks.' They may manage things differently in fairyland; but your 'golden tresses' are to my fancy."

On this remonstrance Coleridge changed the "purple" into "golden," defending his original epithet, and Lamb gave up the point.

In the commencement of the previous year, Coleridge removed from Bristol to a cottage at Nether Stowey, to embody his favourite dream of a cottage life. This change of place probably delayed the printing of the volume; and Coleridge, busy with a thousand speculations, became irregular in replying to the letters with writing which Lamb solaced his weary hours.

Not satisfied with the dedication of his portion of the volume to his sister, and the sonnet which had been sent to the press, Lamb urged on Coleridge the insertion of another, which seems to have been ultimately withheld as too poor in poetical merit for publication. The rejected sonnet ("Friend of my earliest years"), and the references made to it by the writer, have an interest now beyond what mere fancy can give.

At length the small volume containing the poems of Coleridge, Lloyd, and Lamb, was published by Mr. Cottle at Bristol. It excited little attention; but Lamb had the pleasure of seeing his dedication to his sister printed in good set form, after his own fashion, and of witnessing the delight and pride with which she received it. This little book, now very scarce, had the following motto, expressive of Coleridge's feelings towards his associates:—*Duplex nobis vin-*

culum, et amicitiæ et similium junctarumque Camænarum ; quod utinam neque mors solvat, neque temporis longinquitas.[1] Lamb's share of the work consists of

[1] "The Latin motto, prefixed to the second edition of Mr. C.'s poems, puzzled everybody to know from what author it was derived. One and another inquired of me, to no purpose, and expressed a wish that Mr. C. had been clearer in his citation, 'as no one could understand it.' On my naming this to Mr. Coleridge, he laughed heartily, and said, 'It was all a hoax. Not meeting,' said he, 'with a suitable motto, I invented one, and with references perfectly obscure."—Cottle's *Reminiscences*, 168. The reference was an excellent mystification.—"*Groscoll.* Epist. ad Car., *Utenhov. et Ptol. Lux. Last.*"

In this arrangement there were some evidences of the almost tender affection with which Lamb had inspired Coleridge. He would admit Lloyd's poems, "on condition that you print them in this volume of his, Charles Lamb's, poems; the title-page, Poems by S. T. Coleridge. Second Edition; to which are added Poems by C. Lamb and C. Lloyd. C. Lamb's Poems will occupy about forty pages; C. Lloyd's at least one hundred, although only his choice fish." At Lamb's request, however, Lloyd's pieces were placed first. In the new volume Coleridge said, "There were inserted in my former edition a few sonnets of my friend and old schoolfellow, Charles Lamb. He has now communicated to me a complete Collection of all his Poems. *Quæ qui non rorsus amet, illum omnes et Virtutes et Veneres odere.*" He then mentions Lloyd, but not so affectionately. "My friend Charles Lloyd has likewise joined me, and has contributed every poem of his which he deemed worthy of preservation." This republication of the poems seems to have been connected with a dissolution of the partnership, the result of a quarrel between Coleridge and Lloyd, and also of a coolness between Lamb and Coleridge. On receipt of the volume, Lamb had written warmly, praising Lloyd's contributions, which he thought "eminently beautiful," but deferring his consideration of Coleridge's. He was not satisfied, too, with some alterations made in his own lines; "though I think whoever altered . . . . . did wrong." On the other hand, the two minor poets could not have relished some verses in ridicule of their style, which Coleridge sent to a magazine, under the signature of "Nehemiah Higginbotham," and which, as he owned, were intended to expose "that affectation of unaffectedness, of jumping and misplaced accent, in common-place epithets, flat lines forced into

eight sonnets; four short fragments of blank verse, of which the Grandame is the principal; a poem, called the Tomb of Douglas; some verses to Charles

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poetry by italics (signifying how well and mouthishly the author would read them), puny pathos, etc., etc.; the instances were almost all taken from myself, and Lloyd and Lamb." Though he affected to include his own productions, the ridicule really affects his weaker companions. His severity in the case of Lamb, will be seen by comparing the sonnets:—

"Was it some sweet delight of Faery,
That mock'd my steps with many a lonely glade,
And fancied wand'rings with a fair-haired maid.
Have these things been? Or what rare witchery
(Impregning with delights the charmed air)
Enlightened up the semblance of a smile
In those fine eyes? Methought they spake the while
Soft soothing things, which might enforce Despair
To drop the murdering knife, and let go by
His foul resolve. And does the lonely glade,
Still court the footsteps of the fair-haired maid?
Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh?
While I forlorn do wander, heedless where,
And 'mid my wanderings meet no Anna there."

So in the "HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT":

"Did ye not see her gleaming through the glade?
Belike 'twas she, the maiden all forlorn.
What though she milk no cow with crumpled horn,
Yet ay she haunts the dale where erst she stray'd,
And ay beside her stalks her amorous knight!
Still on his thighs his wonted brogues are worn,
And through these brogues, still tattered and betorn,
His hindward charms gleam an unearthly white;
As when through broken clouds, at night's high noon,
Peeps in fair fragment forth—the full-orb'd harvest moon."

However this may have been, it was not likely to have caused any serious dissension between Lamb and his old friend; and the visit to Stowey with Mary Lamb, as stated in the text, seems to have fol-

Lloyd; and a vision of Repentance; which are all published in the last edition of his poetical works, except one of the sonnets, which was addressed to

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lowed, in the first months of the year 1798. It is probable that the sensitive Lloyd showed some jealousy as to the success of the volume, which Coleridge naturally considered was owing to his share in the work. When a new edition was talked of, he may have shown a wish to be free from the alliance; or what is more likely, thought that *his* labours were obscured by "the greater Ajax." Cottle seems to say that both causes were at work. Lloyd proposed to his friend Lamb that they should withdraw theirs from the association, and publish their poems without Coleridge. On this being opened to the latter by the publisher, he wrote scornfully, "It is curious that I should be applied to to be persuaded to resign; and in hopes that I might 'consent to give up' (unknown by whom) a number of poems which were published at the request of the author. . . . Times change and people change; so let us keep our souls in quietness! I have no objection to any disposal of Lloyd's poems, except that of their being republished with mine. The motto which I had prefixed, 'Duplex, etc.,' from Groscollius, has placed me in a ridiculous situation, but it was a foolish and presumptuous start of affectionateness, and I am not unwilling to incur the punishment due to my folly." "Mr. C.," adds Cottle, "even determined that the productions of his two late friends should be excluded. Strange as it may appear, Charles Lamb determined to desert the inglorious ground of neutrality, and to commence active operations against his late friend." At the end of May, 1798, Lamb went down on a visit to Lloyd at Birmingham, and remained a fortnight with him. Never had Lamb "been so happy in his life." His enthusiastic friend, by dwelling on his little grievances against Coleridge, made him a partisan, having indiscreetly shown him a letter, in which was illustrated a distinction between the proportions of great genius and simple talent, contrasted with great talent and little genius, by the instances of Lamb's nature and his own. It was, no doubt, Lloyd that repeated the speech, "Poor Lamb! If he wants any knowledge he may apply to me." This provoked Lamb to address to him the table of Theses, which he proposed that Coleridge should defend or oppugn in the German schools. And what shows that he was hurt by the ridicule of his verses, is his rather bitter retort, "Wishing, learned sir, that you may see Schiller, and *swing in a*

Mrs. Siddons, and the Tomb of Douglas, which was justly omitted as common-place and vapid. They only occupy twenty-eight duodecimo pages, within which space was comprised all that Lamb at this time had written which he deemed worth preserving.

Lamb, however, was not now so lonely as when he wrote to Coleridge imploring his correspondence as the only comfort of his sorrows and labours; for, through the instrumentality of Coleridge, he was now rich in friends. Among his friends then was Wordsworth, the great regenerator of English poetry, preparing for his long contest with the glittering forms of inane phraseology which had usurped the dominion of the public mind, and with the cold mockeries of scorn with which their supremacy was defended. By those the beauty of his character was felt; the original cast of his powers was appreciated; and his

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wood (Vide Poems)," which refers to a sonnet addressed to the German poet, in which occurs the words, "tempest-swinging wood." On receipt of this challenge, Coleridge affected to treat the matter lightly, saying, as he handed the letter to Cottle, "these young visionaries will do each other no good." The publisher saw, however, that he was "greatly hurt," and wrote off "a conciliatory letter" to Lloyd, from whom he received a careless reply:—"I cannot think I have acted with, or from, passion towards him. Even my solitary thoughts have been easy and calm, when they have dwelt on him. . . . At present I could not well go to Stowey. But," he added, "he loved Coleridge." It has been denied that even so much as a vapour ever clouded the intercourse of Lamb and Coleridge, but if further proof were wanting, we have only to turn to "The Old Familiar Faces," published in January, 1798, and where the lines—

> "I have a friend, a kinder friend had no man;
> Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly."

refer to Coleridge.—F.

peculiar humour was detected and kindled into fitful life.

At this time, the only literary man whom Lamb knew in London was George Dyer, who had been noted as an accomplished scholar, in Lamb's early childhood, at Christ's Hospital. For him Lamb cherished all the esteem that his guileless simplicity of character and gentleness of nature could inspire; in these qualities the friends were akin; but no two men could be more opposite than they were to each other, in intellectual qualifications and tastes—Lamb, in all things original, and rejoicing in the quaint, the strange, the extravagant; Dyer, the quintessence of learned commonplace; Lamb wildly catching the most evanescent spirit of wit and poetry; Dyer, the wondering disciple of their established forms. Dyer officiated as a revering High Priest at the Altar of the Muses—such as they were in the staid. antiquated trim of the closing years of the eighteenth century, before they formed sentimental attachments in Germany, or flirted with revolutionary France, or renewed their youth by drinking the Spirit of the Lakes. Lamb esteemed and loved him so well, that he felt himself entitled to make sport with his peculiarities; but it was as Fielding might sport with his own idea of Parson Adams, or Goldsmith with his Dr. Primrose.

CHAPTER III.

[1798—1806.]

Rosamund Gray.—John Woodvil.

In the year 1798, the blank verse of Lloyd and Lamb, which had been contained in the volume published in conjunction with Coleridge, was, with some additions by Lloyd, published in a thin duodecimo, price 2*s.* 6*d.*, under the title of "Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb." This unpretending book was honoured by a brief and scornful notice in the catalogue of *The Monthly Review*, in the small print of which the works of the poets who are now recognised as the greatest ornaments of their age, and who have impressed it most deeply by their genius, were usually named to be dismissed with a sneer. After a contemptuous notice of "The Mournful Muse" of Lloyd, Lamb receives his *quietus* in a line:—"Mr. Lamb, the joint author of this little volume, seems to be very properly associated with his plaintive companion."[1]

In this year Lamb composed his prose tale, "Rosamond Gray," and published it in a volume of the same size and price with the last, under the title of "A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret," which, having a semblance of story, sold much better than his poems, and added a few pounds to his

[1] *Monthly Review*, Sept., 1798.

slender income. This miniature romance is unique in English literature. It bears the impress of a recent perusal of "The Man of Feeling," and "Julia de Roubigné;" and while on the one hand it wants the graphic force and delicate touches of Mackenzie, it is informed with deeper feeling and breathes a diviner morality than the most charming of his tales. Lamb never possessed the faculty of constructing a plot either for drama or novel; and while he luxuriated in the humour of Smollett, the wit of Fielding, or the solemn pathos of Richardson, he was not amused, but perplexed, by the attempt to thread the windings of story which conduct to their most exquisite passages through the maze of adventure. In this tale, nothing is made out with distinctness, except the rustic piety and grace of the lovely girl and her venerable grandmother, which are pictured with such earnestness and simplicity as might beseem a fragment of the book of Ruth. The villain who lays waste their humble joys is a murky phantom without individuality; the events are obscured by the haze of sentiment which hovers over them; and the narrative gives way to the reflections of the author, who is mingled with the persons of the tale in visionary confusion, and gives to it the character of a sweet but disturbed dream. It has an interest now beyond that of fiction; for in it we may trace, "as in a glass darkly," the characteristics of the mind and heart of the author, at a time when a change was coming upon them. There are the dainty sense of beauty just weaned from its palpable object, and quivering over its lost images; feeling grown retrospective before its time, and tinging all things with a strange solemnity; hints of that craving after immediate

appliances which might give impulse to a harassed frame, and confidence to struggling fancy, and of that escape from the pressure of agony into fantastic mirth, which in after life made Lamb a problem to a stranger, while they endeared him a thousand-fold to those who really knew him. While the fulness of the religious sentiments, and the scriptural cast of the language, still partake of his early manhood, the visit of the narrator of the tale to the churchyard where his parents lie buried, after his nerves had been strung for the endeavour by wine at the village inn, and the half-frantic jollity of his old heart-broken friend (the lover of the tale), whom he met there, with the exquisite benignity of thought breathing through the whole, prophesy the delightful peculiarities and genial frailties of an after day. The reflections he makes on the eulogistic character of all the inscriptions, are drawn from his own childhood; for when a very little boy, walking with his sister in a churchyard, he suddenly asked her, "*Mary, where do the naughty people lie?*"

"Rosamund Gray" remained unreviewed till August, 1800, when it received the following notice in *The Monthly Review's* catalogue, the manufacturer of which was probably more tolerant of heterodox composition in prose than verse:—"In the perusal of this pathetic and interesting story, the reader who has a mind capable of enjoying rational and moral sentiment will feel much gratification. Mr. Lamb has here proved himself skilful in touching the nicest feelings of the heart, and in affording great pleasure to the imagination, by exhibiting events and situations which, in the hands of a writer less conversant with the springs and energies of the *moral sense*,

would make a very '*sorry figure.*'" While we acknowledge this scanty praise as a redeeming trait in the long series of critical absurdities, we cannot help observing how curiously misplaced all the laudatory epithets are; the sentiment being profound and true, but not "*rational,*" and the "springs and energies of the moral sense" being substituted for a weakness which had a power of its own!

Lamb was introduced by Coleridge to Southey as early as the year 1795; but no intimacy ensued until he accompanied Lloyd in the summer of 1797 to the little village of Burton, near Christchurch, in Hampshire, where Southey was then residing, and where they spent a fortnight as the poet's guests.[1] After Coleridge's departure for Germany, in 1798, a correspondence began between Lamb and Southey, which continued through that and part of the following year;—Southey communicates to Lamb his Eclogues, which he was then preparing for the press, and Lamb repaying the confidence by submitting the products of his own leisure hours to his genial critic. If Southey did not, in all respects, compensate Lamb for the absence of his earlier friend, he excited in him a more entire and active intellectual sympathy; as the character of Southey's mind bore more resemblance to his own than that of Coleridge. In purity of thought; in the love of the minutest vestige of antiquity; in a certain primness of style bounding in the rich humour which threatened to overflow it; they were nearly akin: both alike reverenced childhood,

[1] "Where I was lodging in a very humble cottage," says Southey.—*Letter to Moxon.* He adds that Lloyd was inclined to form "sudden friendships."—F.

and both had preserved its best attributes unspotted from the world. If Lamb bowed to the genius of Coleridge with a fonder reverence, he felt more at home with Southey; and although he did not pour out the inmost secrets of his soul in his letters to him as to Coleridge, he gave more scope to the "first sprightly runnings" of his humorous fancy.

At this time Lamb's most intimate associates were Lloyd and Jem White, the author of the Falstaff Letters. When Lloyd was in town, he and White lodged in the same house, and were fast friends, though no two men could be more unlike, Lloyd having no drollery in his nature, and White nothing else. "You will easily understand," observes Mr. Southey, in a letter with which he favoured the publisher, "how Lamb could sympathise with both."[1]

The literary association of Lamb with Coleridge and Southey drew down upon him the hostility of the young scorners of the "Anti-Jacobin," who luxuriating in boyish pride and aristocratic patronage, tossed the arrows of their wit against all charged with innovation, whether in politics or poetry, and cared little whom they wounded. No one could be more innocent than Lamb of political heresy; no one more strongly opposed to new theories in morality, which he always regarded with disgust; and yet he not only shared in the injustice which accused his friends of the last, but was confounded in the charge of the first,—his only crime being that he had published a few poems deeply coloured with religious enthusiasm, in conjunction with two other men of genius, who were dazzled by the glowing phantoms which the French

[1] Lloyd died at Versailles in 1839.—F.

Revolution had raised. The very first number of the *Anti-Jacobin Magazine and Review* was adorned by a caricature of Gilray's, in which Coleridge and Southey were introduced with asses' heads, and Lloyd and Lamb as toad and frog. In the number for July appeared the well-known poem of the "New Morality," in which all the prominent objects of the hatred of these champions of religion and order were introduced as offering homage to Lepaux, a French charlatan,—of whose existence Lamb had never even heard.

"Couriers and Stars, sedition's evening host,
Thou *Morning Chronicle*, and *Morning Post*,
Whether ye make the 'Rights of Man' your theme,
Your country libel, and your God blaspheme,
Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
Still *blasphemous or blackguard,* praise Lepaux.

And ye five other wandering bards, that move
In sweet accord of harmony and love,
C——dge and S—th—y, L—d, and L—b and Co.,
Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepaux!"

Not content with thus confounding persons of the most opposite opinions and the most various characters in one common libel, the party returned to the charge in the number for September, and thus denounced the young poets, in a parody on the "Ode to the Passions," under the title of "The Anarchists."

"Next H—le—ft vow'd in doleful tone,
No more to fire a thankless age:
Oblivion mark'd his labours for her own,
Neglected from the press, and damn'd upon the stage.

See! faithful to their mighty dam,
C——dge, S—th—y, L—d, and L—b,
In splay-foot madrigals of love,
Soft moaning like the widow'd dove,

Pour, side-by-side, their sympathetic notes;
Of equal rights, and civic feasts,
And tyrant kings, and knavish priests,
Swift through the land the tuneful mischief floats.

And now to softer strains they struck the lyre,
They sung the beetle or the mole,
The dying kid, or ass's foal,
By cruel man permitted to expire."

These effusions have the palliation which the excess of sportive wit, impelled by youthful spirits and fostered by the applause of the great, brings with it; but it will be difficult to palliate the coarse malignity of a passage in the prose department of the same work, in which the writer added to a statement that Mr. Coleridge was dishonoured at Cambridge for preaching Deism: "Since then he has left his native country, commenced citizen of the world, left his poor children fatherless, and his wife destitute. *Ex his disce*, his friends Lamb and Southey." It was surely rather too much even for partisans, when denouncing their political opponents as men who "dirt on private worth and virtue threw," thus to slander two young men of the most exemplary character—one, of an almost puritanical exactness of demeanour and conduct—and the other, persevering in a life of noble self-sacrifice, chequered only by the frailties of a sweet nature, which endeared him even to those who were not admitted to the intimacy necessary to appreciate the touching example of his severer virtues!

If Lamb's acquaintance with Coleridge and Southey procured for him the scorn of the more virulent of the Anti-Jacobin party, he showed by his intimacy with another distinguished object of their animosity, that he was not solicitous to avert it. He was intro-

duced by Mr. Coleridge to one of the most remarkable persons of that stirring time—the author of "Caleb Williams," and of the "Political Justice." The first meeting between Lamb and Godwin did not wear a promising aspect. Lamb grew warm as the conviviality of the evening advanced, and indulged in some freaks of humour which had not been dreamed of in Godwin's philosophy; and the philosopher, forgetting the equanimity with which he usually looked on the vicissitudes of the world or the whist-table, broke into an allusion to Gilray's caricature, and asked, "Pray, Mr. Lamb, are you *toad* or *frog?*"[1] Coleridge was apprehensive of a rupture; but calling the next morning on Lamb, he found Godwin seated at breakfast with him; and an interchange of civilities and card-parties was established, which lasted through the life of Lamb, whom Godwin only survived a few months. Indifferent altogether to the politics of the age, Lamb could not help being struck with productions of its new-born energies, so remarkable as the works and the character of Godwin. He seemed to realize in himself what Wordsworth long afterwards described, "the central calm at the heart of all agitation." Through the medium of his mind the stormy convulsions of society were seen "silent as in a picture." Paradoxes the most daring wore the air of deliberate wisdom as he pronounced them. He foretold the future happiness of mankind, not with the inspiration of the poet, but with the grave and

[1] "Mrs. Coleridge will remember," writes Southey, "the scene, which was to her sufficiently uncomfortable." In his first edition Talfourd, mistaking the point of the jest, had written, "are you both *toad and frog?*"—F.

passionless voice of the oracle. There was nothing better calculated at once to feed and to make steady the enthusiasm of youthful patriots than the high speculations, in which he taught them to engage on the nature of social evils and the great destiny of his species. No one would have suspected the author of those wild theories, which startled the wise and shocked the prudent, in the calm, gentlemanly person who rarely said anything above the most gentle common-place, and took interest in little beyond the whist-table. His peculiar opinions were entirely subservient to his love of letters. He thought any man who had written a book had attained a superiority over his fellows which placed him in another class, and could scarcely understand other distinctions. Of all his works Lamb liked his "Essay on Sepulchres" the best—a short development of a scheme for preserving in one place the memory of all great writers deceased, and assigning to each his proper station,—quite chimerical in itself, but accompanied with solemn and touching musings on life and death and fame, embodied in a style of singular refinement and beauty.

At this time Lamb began to write the tragedy of "John Woodvil." His admiration of the dramatists of Elizabeth's age was yet young, and had some of the indiscretion of an early love; but there was nothing affected in the antique cast of his language, or the frequent roughness of his verse. His delicate sense of beauty had found a congenial organ in the style which he tasted with rapture; and criticism gave him little encouragement to adapt it to the frigid insipidities of the time. "My tragedy," says he in the first letter to Southey, which alludes to the play, "will be

a medley (or I intend it to be a medley) of laughter and tears, prose and verse; and, in some places, rhyme; songs, wit, pathos, humour; and, if possible, sublimity;—at least, 'tis not a fault in my intention if it does not comprehend most of these discordant atoms—Heaven send they dance not the dance of death!" In another letter he there introduces the delicious rhymed passage in the "Forest Scene," which Godwin, having accidentally seen quoted, took for a choice fragment of an old dramatist, and went to Lamb to assist him in finding the author. It seems to have been finished about Christmas, and transmitted to Mr. Kemble. Like all young authors, who are fascinated by the splendour of theatrical representation, he longed to see his conceptions embodied on the stage, and to receive his immediate reward in the sympathy of a crowd of excited spectators. The hope was vain;—but it cheered him in many a lonely hour, and inspired him to write when exhausted with the business of the day, and when the less powerful stimulus of the press would have been insufficient to rouse him.

In the summer he revisited the scenes in Hertfordshire, where, in his grandmother's time, he had spent so many happy holidays. His choice list of friends in the meantime received a most important addition in Mr. Thomas Manning, then a mathematical tutor at Cambridge; of whom he became a frequent correspondent, and to whom he remained strongly attached through life. Lloyd had become a graduate of the University, and to his introduction Lamb was indebted for Manning's friendship. His letters show how earnestly, yet how modestly, Lamb sought it.

Early in the following year (1800), Lamb, with his

sister, removed to Chapel Street, Pentonville. In the summer he visited Coleridge, at Stowey, and spent a few delightful holidays in his society and that of Wordsworth, who then resided in the neighbourhood. This was the first opportunity Lamb had enjoyed of seeing much of the poet, who was destined to exercise a beneficial and lasting influence on the literature and moral sense of the opening century. At this time Lamb was scarcely prepared to sympathise with the naked simplicity of the "Lyrical Ballads," which Wordsworth was preparing for the press. The "rich conceits" of the writers of Elizabeth's reign, had been blended with his first love of poetry, and he could not at once acknowledge the serene beauty of a style, in which language was only the stainless mirror of thought, and which sought no aid either from the grandeur of artificial life or the pomp of words. In after days he was among the most earnest of this great poet's admirers, and rejoiced as he found the scoffers who sneered at his bold experiment gradually owning his power.

Coleridge shortly after came to town, to make arrangements for his contributions to the daily press, and afterwards spent some weeks with Lamb. It was during this visit that he recommended Lamb to Mr. Daniel Stuart, then editor of the *Morning Post*, as a writer of light articles, by which he might add something to an income, then barely sufficient for the decent support of himself and his sister. It would seem from his letter to Manning, that he had made an offer to try his hand at some personal squibs, which, ultimately, was not accepted. Manning need not have feared that there would have been a particle of malice in them! Lamb afterwards became a cor-

respondent[1] to the paper, and has recorded his experience of the misery of toiling after pleasantries in one of the "Essays of Elia," entitled "Newspapers thirty-five years ago."[2]

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[1] Lamb may have filled this office in the more extended sense of the word. The *Morning Post* at this time sent an agent to Margate, to report the fashionable arrivals, etc. Now from an allusion in one of Lamb's letters, he would seem to have been at Margate about this period (1802-3). I have discovered some of these "pleasantries," which will be found, *post*, in the notes to the Elia Essays.—F.

[2] He was not to keep this connection very long. "Charles has lost the newspaper, but what we dreaded as an evil has proved the greatest blessing, for we have both strangely recovered our health and spirits since this has happened."—*Letter of Mary Lamb*, 1804. Connected with this loss, which was more serious than might have been supposed, was a little incident which gives a charming idea of Mary Lamb, her deep affection and earnestness, as well as of her pleasant discrimination of character. "My brother," she writes, "has had a letter from your Mother, which has distressed him sadly—about the postage of some letters being paid by my brother—your silly brother, it seems, has informed your Mother (I did not think your brother could have been so silly) that Charles had grumbled at paying the said postage. The fact was, just at that time we were very poor, having lost the Morning Post, & we were beginning to practise a strict economy. My brother, who never makes up his mind whether he will be a Miser or a Spendthrift, is at all times a strange mixture of both: of this failing, the even economy of your correct brother's temper makes him an ill judge. The miserly part of Charles, at that time smarting under his recent loss, then happened to reign triumphant; and he would not write, or let me write, so often as he wished, because the postage cost two and four pence. Then came two or three of your poor Mother's letters nearly together; and the two & four pences he wished, but grudged, to pay for his own, he was forced to pay for hers. In this dismal distress, he applied to Fenwick to get his friend Motley to send them free from Portsmouth. This Mr. Fenwick could have done for half a word's speaking; but this he did not do! Then Charles foolishly & unthinkingly complained to your brother in a half serious, half joking way; & your brother has wickedly, and with malice afore thought, told your Mother. O fye upon him! what will your Mo-

Lamb's constant apprehensions of the recurrence of his sister's malady were soon realized. An old maid-servant who assisted her in the lodging became ill; Miss Lamb incessantly watched the death-bed; and just as the poor creature died, was again seized with madness. He placed her under medical care. It would seem from his letters of this time, that the natural determination of Lamb "to take what pleasure he could between the acts of his distressful drama," had led him into a wider circle of companionship, and had prompted sallies of wilder and broader mirth, which afterwards softened into delicacy, retaining all its whim. A passage, which concludes one of his letters to Manning, else occupied with merely personal details, proves that his apprehensions for the diminution of his reverence for sacred things were not wholly unfounded; while, amidst its grotesque expressions, may be discerned the repugnance to the philosophical infidelity of some of his companions he retained through life. It may, perhaps, be regarded as a sort of desperate compromise between a wild gaiety and religious impressions obscured

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ther think of us? By entreaties & prayers I might have prevailed on my brother to say nothing about it. But I make a point of conscience never to interfere or cross my brother in the humour he happens to be in. Charles is sadly fretted now, I know, at what to say to your Mother. Say to her it was a jest misunderstood; tell her Charles Lamb is not the shabby fellow she & her son took him for; but that he is now & then a trifle whimsical or so. I do not ask your brother to do this, for I am offended with him for the mischief he has made."

She adds: "I have known many single men I should have liked in my life (*if it had suited them*) for a husband. but very few husbands have I ever wished was mine, which is rather against the state in general; but one never is disposed to envy wives their good husbands. So much for marrying—but however get married, if you can."—F.

but not effaced; and intimating his disapprobation of infidelity, with a melancholy sense of his own unworthiness seriously to express it. Indeed in all his letters to Manning a vein of wild humour breaks out, of which there are but slight indications in the correspondence with his more sentimental friends; as if the very opposition of Manning's more scientific power to his own force of sympathy provoked the sallies which the genial kindness of the mathematician fostered. The prodigal and reckless humour of some of these letters forms a striking contrast to the deep feeling of the earlier letters to Coleridge. His "Essays of Elia' show the harmonious union of both.

During this year (1800) Lamb carried into effect his purpose of removing to Mitre Court Buildings, Temple. During this time he wrote only a few poems. Meanwhile he had engaged to spend a few days when he could obtain leave, with Manning at Cambridge, and, just as he hoped to accomplish his wish, received an invitation from Lloyd to give his holiday to the poets assembled at the Lakes. In the joyous excitement of spirits which the anticipated visit to Manning produced, he played off Manning's proposal on his friend, and abused mountains and luxuriated in his love of London.

He was presently called on to "assist" at the production of a tragedy, by a friend, whose more mature reputation gave him readier access to the manager, but who had no better claim to success than himself. Mr. Godwin, whose powerful romance of Caleb Williams had supplied the materials for "The Iron Chest" of Colman, naturally aspired, on his own account, to the glory of the scene, and completed a tragedy under the title of "Antonio; or, the Soldier's

Return," which was accepted at Drury-lane Theatre, and was announced for representation on Saturday, the 13th December in this year. Lamb supplied the epilogue.

Alas for human hopes! The play was decisively damned, and the epilogue shared its fate. The tragedy turned out a miracle of dulness for the world to wonder at, although Lamb always insisted it had one fine line, which he was fond of repeating—sole relic of the else forgotten play.[1] Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, the brother and sister of the play, toiled through four acts and a half without applause or disapprobation; one speech was not more vapid than another; and so dead was the level of the dialogue, that, although its destiny was seen from afar, it presented no opportunity for hissing. But as the play drew towards a close, when, after a scene of frigid chiding not vivified by any fire of Kemble's own, Antonio drew his sword and plunged it into the heroine's bosom, the "sad civility" of the audience vanished, they started as at a real murder, and hooted the actors from the stage. "Philosophy," which could not "make a Juliet," sustained the author through the trial. He sat on one of the front benches of the pit, unmoved amidst the storm. When the first act passed off without a hand, he expressed his satisfaction at the good sense of the house; "the proper season of applause had not arrived;" all was exactly

[1] In the fourth scene of that tragedy, where the description of the Pagan deities occurs. "In speaking of Saturn, he is figured as 'an old man melancholy.' 'That was *my* line,' Lamb would say, exultingly. I forget how it was originally written, except that it had not the extra (or eleventh) syllable, which it now has."—*Procter*.—F.

as it should be. The second act proceeded to its close in the same uninterrupted calm; his friends became uneasy, but still his optimism prevailed; he could afford to wait. And though he did at last admit the great movement was somewhat tardy, and that the audience seemed rather patient than interested, he did not lose his confidence till the tumult arose, and then he submitted with quiet dignity to the fate of genius, too lofty to be understood by a world as yet in its childhood! Notwithstanding this rude repulse, Mr. Godwin retained his taste for the theatre to the last. On every first night of a new piece, whether tragedy, comedy, or farce, whether of friend or foe, he sat with gentle interest in a side-box, and bore its fate, whatever it might be, with resignation, as he had done his own.[1]

The ominous postponement of Lamb's theatrical hopes was followed by their disappointment at the commencement of the century. He was favoured with at least one interview by the stately manager of Drury Lane, Mr. Kemble, who extended his high-bred courtesy even to authors, whom he invariably attended to the door of his house in Great Russell Street, and bade them "beware of the step." Godwin's catastrophe had probably rendered him less solicitous to encounter a similar peril; which the fondest admirers of "John Woodvil" will not regret that it escaped. While the occasional roughness of its verse would have been felt as strange to ears as yet unused to the old dramatists whom Lamb's Specimens had not then made familiar to the town, the delicate beauties

[1] Lamb's grotesque account of the scene will be found in a retrenched passage of one of his Essays.—F.

enshrined within it would scarcely have been perceived in the glare of the theatre. Exhibiting "the depth, and not the tumults of the soul,"—presenting a female character of modest and retiring loveliness and noble purpose, but undistracted with any violent emotion,—and developing a train of circumstances which work out their gentle triumphs on the heart only of the hero, without stirring accident or vivid grouping of persons,—it would scarcely have supplied sufficient of coarse interest to disarm the critical spirit which it would certainly have encountered in all its bitterness. Lamb cheerfully consoled himself by publishing it; and at the close of the year 1801 it appeared in a small volume, of humble appearance, with the "Fragments of Burton" (to which Lamb alluded in one of his previous letters), two of his quarto ballads, and the "Helen" of his sister.

The daring peculiarities attracted the notice of the Edinburgh reviewers, then in the infancy of their slashing career, and the volume was immolated, in due form, by the self-constituted judges, who, taking for their motto "*Judex damnatur cùm nocens absolvitur*," treated our author as a criminal convicted of publishing, and awaiting his doom from their sentence. With the gay recklessness of power, at once usurped and irresponsible, they introduced Lord Mansfield's wild construction of the law of libel into literature; like him, holding every man *primâ facie* guilty, who should be caught in the act of publishing *a book*, and referring to the court to decide whether sentence should be passed on him. The article on "John Woodvil," which adorned their third number, is a curious example of the old style of criticism vivified by the impulses of youth. We wonder now

—and probably the writer of the article, if he is living, will wonder with us—that a young critic should seize on a little eighteen-penny book, simply printed, without any preface; make elaborate merriment of its outline, and, giving no hint of its containing one profound thought or happy expression, leave the reader of the review at a loss to suggest a motive for noticing such vapid absurdities. This article is written in a strain of grave banter, the theme of which is to congratulate the world on having a specimen of the rudest condition of the drama, "a man of the age of Thespis." "At length," says the reviewer, "even in composition a mighty veteran has been born. Older than Æschylus, and with all the spirit of originality, in an age of poets who had before them the imitations of some thousand years, he comes forward to establish his claim to the ancient *hircus*, and to satiate the most remote desires of the philosophic antiquary." On this text the writer proceeds, selecting for his purpose whatever, torn from its context, appeared extravagant and crude, and ending without the slightest hint that there is merit, or promise of merit, in the volume. There certainly was no malice, or desire to give pain, in all this; it was merely the result of the thoughtless adoption, by lads of gaiety and talent, of the old critical canons of the Monthly Reviews, which had been accustomed to damn all works of unpatronized genius in a more summary way, and after a duller fashion. These very critics wrought themselves into good-nature as they broke into deeper veins of thought; grew gentler as they grew wiser: and sometimes, even when, like Balaam, they came to curse, like him, they ended with "blessing altogether,"

as in the review of the "Excursion," which, beginning in the old strain, "This will never do," proceeded to give examples of its noblest passages, and to grace them with worthiest eulogy. And now, the spirit of the writers thus ridiculed, especially of Wordsworth, breathes through the pages of this very Review, and they not seldom wear the "rich embroidery" of the language of the poet once scoffed at by their literary corporation as too puerile for the nursery.

The year 1803 passed without any event to disturb the dull current of Lamb's toilsome life. He wrote nothing this year, except some newspaper squibs. His occasional connection with newspapers introduced him to some of the editors and contributors of that day, who sought to repair the spirit wasted by perpetual exertion, in the protracted conviviality of the evening, and these associates sometimes left poor Lamb with an aching head, and a purse exhausted by the claims of their necessities upon it. Among those was Fenwick, immortalised as the *Bigod* of "Elia," who edited several ill-fated newspapers in succession, and was the author of many libels, which did his employers no good and his Majesty's government no harm. This year he also wrote the delightful little poem on the death of Hester Savory. This he sent to Manning at Paris, with the following account of its subject:—

"Dear Manning, I send you some verses I have made on the death of a young Quaker you may have heard me speak of as being in love with for some years while I lived at Pentonville, though I had never spoken to her in my life. She died about a month since. If you have interest with the Abbé de Lisle,

you may get 'em translated: he has done as much for the Georgics."

The verses must have been written in the very happiest of Lamb's serious mood. I cannot refrain from the luxury of quoting the conclusion, though many readers have it by heart.

> "My sprightly neighbour, gone before
> To that unknown and silent shore!
> Shall we not meet as heretofore,
> Some summer morning.
>
> When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
> Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
> A bliss that would not go away,
> A sweet forewarning?"

There is no vestige of Lamb's correspondence in the year 1804, nor does he seem to have written for the press. This year, however, added to his list of friends—one in whose conversation he took great delight, until death severed them—William Hazlitt. This remarkable metaphysician and critic had then just completed his first work, the "Essay on the Principles of Human Action," but had not entirely given up his hope of excelling as a painter. After a professional tour through part of England, during which he satisfied his sitters better than himself, he remained some time at the house of his brother, then practising as a portrait painter with considerable success; and while endeavouring to procure a publisher for his work, painted a portrait of Lamb.[1]

[1] Some extracts from Mary Lamb's letters, of this period, will give an idea of the secret gloom that overhung this *ménage*. It suggests the painful influences brother and sister had to struggle against, and that there were in that household other dismal elements. This indeed

It is one of the last of Hazlitt's efforts in an art which he afterwards illustrated with the most ex-

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was only to be expected, and is scarcely hinted at in Talfourd's equable narrative.

Miss Lamb wrote in Sept., 1805: —"If I possibly can, I will prevail upon Charles to write to your brother; but he is so unwell, I almost fear the fortnight will slip away before I can get him in the right vein, indeed, it has been sad & heavy times with us lately: when I am pretty well, his low spirits throws me back again; & when he begins to get a little chearful, then I do the same kind office for him. I heartily wish for the arrival of Coleridge; a few such evenings as we have sometimes passed with him would wind us up, and set us a going again. Do not say any thing, when you write, of our low spirits—it will vex Charles. You would laugh, or you would cry, perhaps both, to see us sit together, looking at each other with long and rueful faces, & saying, 'how do you do?' & 'how do you do?' and then we fall a-crying, & say we will be better on the morrow."

Again in November:

"Your kind heart will, I know, even if you have been a little displeased, forgive me, when I assure you my spirits have been so much hurt by my last illness, that at times I hardly know what I do. I do not mean to alarm you about myself, or to plead an excuse; but I am very much otherwise than you have always known me. I do not think any one perceives me altered, but I have lost all self-confidence in my own actions, & one cause of my low spirits is, that I never feel satisfied with any thing I do—a perception of not being in a sane state perpetually haunts me."

What follows opens up further the troubled interior:—"Charles is very busy at the Office; he will be kept there to-day till seven or eight o'Clock: and he came home very *smoky* & *drinky* last night; so that I am afraid a hard day's work will not agree very well with him.

"*March* [*May*] 14.—Here I was interrupted; and a long, tedious interval has intervened, during which I have had neither time nor inclination to write a word. The Lodging—that pride and pleasure of your heart & mine, is given up, *and here he is again*—Charles, I mean—as unsettled and as undetermined as ever. When he went to the poor lodging, after the hollidays I told you he had taken, he could not endure the solitariness of them, and I had no rest for the sole of

quisite criticism which the knowledge and love of it could inspire.

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my foot till I promised to believe his solemn protestations that he could & would write as well at home as there. Do you believe this?

"I have no power over Charles—he will do—what he will do. But I ought to have some little influence over myself. You shall hear a good account of me, and the progress I make in altering my fretful temper to a calm and quiet one. It is but being once thorowly convinced one is wrong, to make one resolve to do so no more; and I know my dismal faces have been almost as great a drawback upon Charles's comfort, as his feverish, teazing ways have been upon mine. Our love for each other has been the torment of our lives hitherto. I am most seriously intending to bend the whole force of my mind to counteract this, and I think I see some prospect of success.

"Of Charles ever bringing any work to pass at home, I am very doubtful; and of the farce succeeding, I have little or no hope; but if I could once get into the way of being chearful myself, I should see an easy remedy in leaving town & living cheaply, almost wholly alone; but till I do find we really are comfortable alone, and by ourselves, it seems a dangerous experiment. We shall certainly stay where we are till after next Christmas."—*Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb.*—F.

CHAPTER IV.

[1806—1815.]

"Mr. H."—Temple Lane.—The "Quarterly Review" attack.

"The first-fruits of my retirement," Lamb wrote to Hazlitt, "has now been a farce which goes to manager to-morrow. *Wish my ticket luck.* God bless you, and do write.—Yours, *fumosissimus*, C. Lamb."

The farce referred to is the delightful *jeu d'esprit*, "Mr. H.," destined to only one night's stage existence, but to become "good jest for ever." It must be confessed that it has not substance enough for a dramatic piece in two acts—a piece which must present a show of real interest—involve its pair of young lovers in actual perplexities—and terminate in the seriousness of marriage![1] It would be rare sport in Milton's "Limbo of Vanity," but is too airy for the ponderous sentimentalism of the modern school of farce. As Swift, in "Gulliver," brings everything to the standard of size, so in this farce everything is reduced to an alphabetical standard. Humour is sent to school to learn its letters; or, rather, letters are made instinct with the most delicate humour. It is the apotheosis of the alphabet, and teaches the value of a good name without the least hint of moral

[1] Leigh Hunt thought that had the name been "Mr. Horridface, or Mr. Hangman, or Mr. Hornowl or Hellish," etc., the effect would have been better.—F.

purpose.[1] This mere pleasantry—this refining on sounds and letters—this verbal banter, and watery collision of the pale reflexions of words, could not succeed on a stage which had begun to require interest, moral or immoral, to be interwoven with the web of all its actions; which no longer rejoiced in the riot of animal spirits and careless gaiety; which no longer permitted wit to take the sting from evil, as well as the load from care; but infected even its prince of rakes, Charles Surface, with a cant of sentiment which makes us turn for relief to the more honest hypocrite his brother. Mr. H. "could never *do*;" but its composition was pleasant, and its acceptance gave Lamb some of the happiest moments he ever spent.[2]

Wednesday, 10th December, 1806, was the wished-for evening which decided the fate of "Mr. H." on the boards of Drury. Great curiosity was excited by the announcement; the house was crowded to the ceiling; and the audience impatiently awaited the conclusion of the long, dull, intolerable opera of "The Travellers," by which it was preceded. At length, Mr. Elliston, the hero of the farce, entered, gaily dressed, and in happiest spirits—enough, but not too much, elated—and delivered the prologue with great vivacity and success. The farce began; at first it was much applauded; but the wit seemed wire-drawn; and when the curtain fell on the first act, the friends of the author began to fear. The second act dragged

[1] This is a too exaggerated estimate of the merits of the piece, which is undramatic in construction. In Alibone's Dictionary it is stated that it was acted with success at Philadelphia.—F.

[2] Mary Lamb carried it herself to Drury Lane. "He was very civil to me," she says of Wroughton the manager.—F.

heavily on, as second acts of farces will do; a rout at Bath, peopled with ill-dressed and over-dressed actors and actresses, increased the disposition to yawn; and when the moment of disclosure came, and nothing worse than the name *Hogsflesh* was heard, the audience resented the long play on their curiosity, and would hear no more. Lamb, with his sister, sat, as he anticipated, in the front of the pit, and having joined in encoring the epilogue, the brilliancy of which injured the farce, he gave way with equal pliancy to the common feeling, and hissed and hooted as loudly as any of his neighbours. The next morning's playbill contained a veracious announcement, that "*the new farce of* MR. H., *performed for the first time last night, was received by an overflowing audience with universal applause, and will be repeated for the second time to-morrow;*" but the stage lamps never that morrow saw! Elliston would have tried it again: but Lamb saw at once that the case was hopeless, and consoled his friends with a century of puns for the wreck of his dramatic hopes.[1]

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[1] It was thus announced. "To-morrow The Travellers, after which (never acted) a new Farce in two acts, called 'Mr. H——.' The characters by Mr. Elliston, Mr. Bartley, Mr. Wewitzer, Miss Mellon, Miss Tidswell," etc. The performance was thus criticised in the *Morning Chronicle*:—"Last night, after the opera of The Travellers, a new Farce was produced here, entitled 'Mr. H——.' This air of mystery had the effect of attracting a very numerous audience. Before the rising of the curtain, and for some time after, many conjectures were formed respecting the name, and a few of the spectators seemed disposed to concur with some of the personages of the piece, in the supposition that he must turn out to be no other than the Prince of Hesse in disguise." An account follows of the plot. "The idea certainly might have afforded material for a laughable entertainment, as it may be easily conceived that the fear of discovery might have brought Mr. H——

From this period, the letters of Lamb which have been preserved are comparatively few, with reference

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into many awkward predicaments, and his excessive irritability respecting his name occasioned much ludicrous conversation. The author has not by any means made so much of it as he might have done. At the same time he did not entirely fail, for the horror of Mr. H. at his own name, and his embarrassment from the eagerness of everybody to discover it, was tolerably supported. But there were defects in the piece, which justified a part of the disapprobation which it experienced towards the close. The chief of these were, first, the excessive length to which the puns on the name were carried after the discovery; and secondly, the want of prominent characters. . . . This excessive punning produces disgust rather than laughter. The only character of any consequence is Mr. H. himself, and he, unfortunately, is not managed so as to enable him to support completely the interest of the piece. The unexpected change of name seemed to shock from its improbability, and the pun attached to it rather increased the disgust. The conclusion, too, was exceedingly tame and ill-managed. If, however, the most obnoxious of the puns were struck out, and a more interesting concluding scene devised, the piece might be tolerable. Certainly, even as it is, more insipid farces have been endured, and the dissatisfaction with which it was received was greater than the occasion called for. A considerable number, however, declared in its favour, and it was given out for a second representation on Friday." The author, Hazlitt, and Mr. Crabb Robinson sat together in the front row of the pit. The reception of the prologue was encouraging, and it was believed that had a less ponderous piece than The Travellers opened the performance the piece might have succeeded. His two companions were astonished to find him joining in the hisses. Lewis the actor declared, that with judicious curtailment it would even have been popular. Even now, when its author's reputation is established, it would be found amusing, and certainly interesting, if compressed into a one-act piece. On the following morning it was announced for Friday evening; but in the programme of that day appeared the following:—"*** The new farce of Mr. H—— is withdrawn at the request of the author;" and "Three Weeks after Marriage" was substituted. "Much whim," said the *Daily Advertiser*, "was expected. The piece was completely condemned." The laborious Geneste declares "that worse farces than this have been successful."—F.

to the years through which they are scattered. He began to write in earnest for the press, and the time thus occupied was withdrawn from his correspondents, while his thoughts and feelings were developed by a different excitement, and expressed in other forms. In the year 1807 the series of stories founded on the plays of Shakspeare, referred to in his last letter to Manning, was published; in which the outlines of his plots are happily brought within the apprehension of children, and his language preserved wherever it was possible to retain it; a fit counterpoise to those works addressed to the young understanding, to which Lamb still cherished the strong distaste which broke out in one of his previous letters. Of these tales, King Lear, Macbeth, Timon of Athens, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, and Othello, are by Charles, and the others by Mary Lamb; hers being, as Lamb always insisted, the most felicitous, but all well adapted to infuse some sense of the nobleness of the poet's thoughts into the hearts of their little readers. He had two other works preparing for the press.

Miss Lamb, also, sought to contribute to her brother's scanty income by presenting the plots of some of Shakespeare's plays in prose, with the spirit of the poet's genius interfused, and many of his happiest expressions preserved, in which good work Lamb assisted her; though he always insisted, as he did in reference to "Mrs. Leicester's School," that her portions were the best.

During the next year they produced their charming little book of "Poetry for Children," and removed from Mitre Court to Southampton Buildings, but only for a few months, and preparatory to a settlement (which meant to be final) in those rooms in Inner

Temple Lane,—most dear of all their abodes to the memory of their ancient friends—where first I knew them. The change produced its natural and sad effect on Miss Lamb.[1]

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[1] Here is Mary Lamb's quaint sketch of the place, written four years later:—"We still live in Temple Lane, but I am now sitting in a room you never saw; soon after you left us we were distressed by the cries of a cat, which seemed to proceed from the garrets adjoining to ours, and only separated from ours by the locked door on the farther side of my brother's bedroom, which you know was the little room at the top of the kitchen stairs. We had the lock forced and let poor puss out from behind a panel of the wainscot, and she lived with us from that time, for we were in gratitude bound to keep her, as she had introduced us to four untenanted, unowned rooms, and by degrees we have taken possession of these unclaimed apartments—first putting up lines to dry our clothes, then moving my brother's bed into one of them, more commodious than his own room. And last winter, my brother being unable to pursue a work he had begun, owing to the kind interruptions of friends who were more at leisure than himself, I persuaded him that he might write at his ease in one of these rooms, as he could not then hear the door knock, or hear himself denied to be at home, which was sure to make him call out and convict the poor maid in a fib. Here, I said, he might be almost really not at home. So I put in an old grate, and made him a fire in the largest of these garrets, and carried in one table and one chair, and bid him write away, and consider himself as much alone as if he were in some lodging on the midst of Salisbury Plain, or any other wide unfrequented place where he could expect few visitors to break in upon his solitude. I left him quite delighted with his new acquisition, but in a few hours he came down again with a sadly dismal face. He could do nothing, he said, with those bare whitewashed walls before his eyes. He could not write in that dull unfurnished prison.

"The next day, before he came home from his office, I had gathered up various bits of old carpeting to cover the floor; and, to a little break the blank look of the bare walls, I hung up a few old prints that used to ornament the kitchen, and after dinner, with great boast of what an improvement I had made, I took Charles once more into his new study. A week of busy labours followed, in which I think you would not have disliked to have been our assistant. My brother and I

A journey into Wiltshire, to visit Hazlitt, followed Miss Lamb's recovery. Martin Burney and a large company were of the party.[1]

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almost covered the walls with prints, for which purpose he cut out every print from every book in his old library, coming in every now and then to ask my leave to strip a fresh poor author—which he might not do, you know, without my permission, as I am elder sister. There was such pasting, such consultation where their portraits, and where a series of pictures from Ovid, Milton, and Shakespeare would show to most advantage, and in what obscure corner authors of humbler note might be allowed to tell their stories. All the books gave up their stories but one—a translation from Ariosto—a delicious set of four-and-twenty prints, and for which I had marked out a conspicuous place; when lo! we found at the moment the scissors were going to work that a part of the poem was printed at the back of every picture. What a cruel disappointment! To conclude this long story about nothing, the poor despised garret is now called the print room, and is become our most favourite sitting-room."—Mary Lamb to Miss Betham, Nov. 2, 1814.

Mr. Crabb Robinson says the place was little more than "a garret;" and in his diary, Talfourd's allusion to its disastrous effect on Mary Lamb receives significant confirmation. In 1810, Mr. Robinson wrote that she was "in a feeble and tottering condition. *Water prescribed.*" The amiable motive of her brother's abstinence appears to have been a wish to encourage and support her; and though the practice improved his health, yet when in low spirits it left him without a remedy.—F.

[1] As a large company was invited; and Mary Lamb, with touching forethought, seems to have sent the hostess a contribution to defray the extra expense, "We can spare you also just five pounds," she wrote. "You are not to say this to Hazlitt, lest his delicacy should be alarmed; but I tell you what Martin and I have planned, that, if you happen to be empty pursed at this time, you may think it as well to make him up a bed in the best kitchen.

"I think it very probable that Phillips will come; and, if you do not like such a crowd of us, for they both talk of staying a whole month, tell me so, and we will put off our visit to next summer.

"The 14th July is the day Martin has fixed for *coming*. I should have written before, if I could have got a positive answer from them."—F.

But the country excursions, with which Lamb sometimes occupied his weeks of vacation, were taken with fear and trembling—often foregone—and finally given up, in consequence of the sad effects which the excitement of travel and change produced in his beloved companion.

Two new works were shortly after published. "The Adventures of Ulysses" had some tinge of the quaintness of Chapman; it gives the plot of the earliest and one of the most charming of romances, without spoiling its interest. The "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakspeare," were received with more favour than Lamb's previous works, though it was only by slow and imperceptible degrees that they won their way to the apprehensions of the most influential minds, and wrought out the genial purpose of the editor in renewing a taste for the great contemporaries of Shakspeare. *The Monthly Review* vouchsafed a notice in its large print, upon the whole favourable, according to the existing fashion of criticism, but "craftily qualified." It will scarcely be credited, without reference to the article itself, that on the notes the critic pronounces this judgment: "The notes before us indeed have nothing very remarkable, except the style, which is formally abrupt and elaborately quaint. Some of the most studied attempts to display excessive feeling we had noted for animadversion, but the task is unnecessary," etc.

It is easy to conceive of readers strongly dissenting from some of the passionate eulogies of these notes, and even taking offence at the boldness of the allusions; but that any one should read these essences of criticism, suggesting the profoundest thoughts, and

replete throughout with fine imagery, and find in them "nothing remarkable," is a mystery which puzzles us. But when the same critic speaks of the heroine of the "Broken Heart" as "the light-heeled Calantha," it is easy to appreciate his fitness for sitting in judgment on the old English drama and the congenial expositor of its grandeurs!

In the autumn, the establishment of a Quarterly Magazine, entitled the *Reflector*, opened a new sphere for Lamb's powers as a humorist and a critic. Its editor, Mr. Leigh Hunt, having been educated in the same school, enjoyed many associations and friendships in common with him, and was thus able to excite in Lamb the greatest motive for exertion in the zeal of kindness. In this Magazine appeared some of Lamb's noblest effusions; his essay "On Garrick and Acting," which contains the character of Lear, perhaps the noblest criticism ever written, and on the noblest human subject; his delightful "Essays on Hogarth;" his "Farewell to Tobacco," and several of the choicest of his gayer pieces.

The number of the *Quarterly Review*, for December, 1811, contained an attack upon Lamb, which it would be difficult, as well as painful, to characterise as it deserves. Mr. Weber, in his edition of "Ford," had extracted Lamb's note on the catastrophe of "The Broken Heart," in which Lamb, speaking of that which he regarded as the highest exhibition of tragic suffering which human genius had depicted, dared an allusion which was perhaps too bold for those who did not understand the peculiar feeling by which it was suggested, but which no unprejudiced mind could mistake for the breathing of other than a pious spirit. In reviewing Mr. Weber, the critic, who was also the

editor of the Review, thus complains of the quotation:—"We have a more serious charge to bring against the editor than the omission of points, or the misapprehension of words. He has polluted his pages with the blasphemies *of a poor maniac*, who, it seems, once published some detached scenes of the 'Broken Heart.' For this unfortunate creature, every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation; but for Mr. Weber, we know not where the warmest of his friends will find palliation or excuse." It would be unjust to attribute this paragraph to the accidental association of Lamb in literary undertakings with persons like Mr. Hunt, strongly opposed to the political opinions of Mr. Gifford. It seems rather the peculiar expression of the distaste of a small though acute mind for an original power which it could not appreciate, and which disturbed the conventional associations of which it was master, aggravated by bodily weakness and disease.[1]

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[1] Talfourd, in his warmth for his friend, taunts the reviewer with having a small but acute mind, with associations "aggravated by bodily weakness and disease." This reproach offends against taste almost as much as the original attack. It would seem incredible indeed, even in those days of personality, that any writer would have made an infirmity of the kind a subject of abuse; this kind of recrimination being in favour, as Lamb has said in one of his "popular fallacies," with the lower and less cultivated classes. It seems that Mr. Gifford meant no more than the conventional terms that were applied in *The Anti-Jacobin* and other Tory organs, to Radicals and Freethinkers, then invariably pronounced to be fools, madmen, or scoundrels. Southey wrote to the publisher, Murray, lamenting that such an unfortunate expression had been used, and received from Gifford the following, dated Feb. 13, 1812:—

"My dear Sir,— . . . I have this moment received your last letter to Murray. It has grieved and shocked me beyond expression; but, my dear friend, I am innocent, as far as the intent goes. I call God to

Notwithstanding this attack, Lamb was prompted by his admiration for Wordsworth's "Excursion" to contribute a review of that work, on its appearance, to the Quarterly, and he anticipated great pleasure in the poet's approval of his criticism; but when the review appeared, the article was so mercilessly mangled by the editor, that Lamb entreated Wordsworth not to read it. For these grievances Lamb took a very gentle revenge in his sonnet, "Saint Crispin to Mr. Gifford."

Lamb, as we have seen, cared nothing for politics;

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witness that in the whole course of my life I never heard one syllable of Mr. Lamb or his family. I knew not that he ever had a sister, or that he had parents living, or that he or any person connected with him had ever manifested the slightest tendency to insanity. In a word, I declare to you, *in the most solemn manner*, that all I ever knew or ever heard of Mr. Lamb was merely his name. Had I been aware of one of the circumstances which you mention, I would have lost my right arm sooner than have written what I have. The plain truth is, I was shocked at seeing him compare the suffering and death of a person who just continues to dance after the death of her lover is announced (for this is all her merit) to the pangs of Mount Calvary; and not choosing to attribute it to FOLLY, because I reserved that charge for Weber, I unhappily in the present case ascribed it to madness, for which I pray God to forgive me, since the blow has fallen heavily where I really thought it would not be felt. I considered Lamb as a thoughtless scribbler, who, in circumstances of ease, amused himself by writing upon any subject. Why I thought so I cannot tell, but it was the opinion I formed to myself, for I now regret to say I never made any inquiry upon the subject; nor by any accident in the whole course of my life did I hear him mentioned beyond his name."

It must be said that nothing could be more frank or truthful than this explanation; and this genuine distress, as Southey says, makes one think better of Gifford. It was unfortunate that the letter was not found in time to be used in the Biography. Further, on consulting the number, I could not succeed in finding the obnoxious passage: so Gifford must have withdrawn it in the later impressions.—F.

yet his desire to serve his friends sometimes induced him to adopt for a short time their view of public affairs, and assist them with a harmless pleasantry.[1] His epigram on the disappointment of the Whig associates of the Regent, appeared in the *Examiner;* and the better known "Triumph of the Whale," also published in the same paper, would probably have only caused a smile if read by the Regent himself, and may now be republished without offence to any one. At the time when he wrote it, Lamb used to stop any passionate attacks upon the prince, with the smiling remark, "*I* love my Regent."

[1] This scarcely represents the true state of the case. Lamb's political squibs all show a heartiness and bitterness—witness his epigram on Sir J. Mackintosh—which proves that his feelings were engaged. These satires, too, are much more numerous than is supposed. It was only Talfourd's amiable optimism that could have led him to believe that the Regent would have "smiled" on reading "The Whale;" a more bitter, savage onslaught was never made.—F.

CHAPTER V.

[1815 to 1817.]

Lamb's Suppers.

It was at the beginning of the year 1815 that I had first the happiness of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Lamb. With his scattered essays and poems I had become familiar a few weeks before, through the instrumentality of Mr. Barron Field, now Chief Justice of Gibraltar, who had been brought into close intimacy with Lamb by the association of his own family with Christ's Hospital, of which his father was the surgeon, and by his own participation in the *Reflector*. Living then in chambers in Inner Temple Lane, and attending those of Mr. Chitty, the special pleader, which were on the next staircase to Mr. Lamb's, I had been possessed some time by a desire to become acquainted with the writings of my gifted neighbour, which my friend was able only partially to gratify. "John Woodvil," and the number of the *Reflector* enriched with Lamb's article, he indeed lent me, but he had no copy of "Rosamund Gray," which I was most anxious to read, and which, after earnest search through all the bookstalls within the scope of my walks, I found, exhibiting proper marks of due appreciation, in the store of a little circulating library near Holborn. There was something in this little romance so entirely new, yet breathing the air of old acquaintance; a sense of

beauty so delicate and so intense; and a morality so benignant and so profound, that, as I read it, my curiosity to see its author rose almost to the height of pain. The commencement of the new year brought me that gratification; I was invited to meet Lamb at dinner, at the house of Mr. William Evans, a gentleman holding an office in the India House, who then lived in Weymouth Street, and who was a proprietor of the *Pamphleteer*, to which I had contributed some idle scribblings. My duties at the office did not allow me to avail myself of this invitation to dinner, but I went up at ten o'clock, through a deep snow, palpably congealing into ice, and was amply repaid when I reached the hospitable abode of my friend. There was Lamb, preparing to depart, but he stayed half an hour in kindness to me, and then accompanied me to our common home—the Temple.

Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued, with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance, and even dignity, to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance —catch its quivering sweetness—and fix it for ever in

words? There are none, alas! to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, presents an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterised by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning of Braham—"a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel." He took my arm, and we walked to the Temple, Lamb stammering out fine remarks as we walked; and when we reached his staircase, he detained me with an urgency which would not be denied, and we mounted to the top story, where an old petted servant, called Becky, was ready to receive us. We were soon seated beside a cheerful fire; hot water and its better adjuncts were before us; and Lamb insisted on my sitting with him while he smoked "one pipe"—for, alas! for poor human nature—he had resumed his acquaintance with his "fair traitress." How often the pipe and the glasses were replenished, I will not undertake to disclose; but I can never forget the conversation: though the first, it was more solemn, and in higher mood, than any I ever after had with Lamb through the whole of our friendship. How it took such a turn between two strangers, one of them a lad of not quite twenty, I cannot tell; but so it happened. We discoursed then of life and death, and our anticipation of a world beyond the grave. Lamb spoke of these awful themes with the simplest piety, but expressed his own fond cleavings to life—to all well-known accustomed things—and a shivering (not shuddering) sense of that which is to come, which he so finely indicated in his "New Year's Eve," years afterwards.

It was two o'clock before we parted, when Lamb gave me a hearty invitation to renew my visit at pleasure; but two or three months elapsed before I saw him again. In the meantime, a number of the *Pamphleteer*, contained an "Essay on the Chief Living Poets," among whom on the title appeared the name of Lamb, and some page or two were expressly devoted to his praises. It was a poor tissue of tawdry eulogies—a shallow outpouring of young enthusiasm in fine words, which it mistakes for thoughts; yet it gave Lamb, who had hitherto received scarcely civil notice from reviewers, great pleasure to find that any one recognised him as having a place among the poets. The next time I saw him, he came almost breathless into the office, and proposed to give me what I should have chosen as the greatest of all possible honours and delights—an introduction to Wordsworth, who I learned, with a palpitating heart, was actually at the next door. I hurried out with my kind conductor, and a minute after was presented by Lamb to the person whom in all the world I venerated most with this preface:—"Wordsworth, give me leave to introduce to you my only admirer."

The years which Lamb passed in his chambers in Inner Temple Lane were, perhaps, the happiest of his life. His salary was considerably augmented, his fame as an author was rapidly extending;[1] he resided

[1] Many years later he met Moore at breakfasts and dinners; and it is amusing to see the air of patronage with which the poet records his impressions. "A clever fellow certainly," he writes in his diary, "but full of villanous and abortive puns, which he miscarries of every minute." He was, however, pleased with his comic idea of forming a library solely of the heroes of the Dunciad, displacing the Humes. Gibbons, and other respectable authors, "which no gentleman's library

near the spot which he best loved; and was surrounded by a motley group of attached friends, some of them men of rarest parts, and all strongly attached to him and to his sister. Here the glory of his Wednesday nights shone forth in its greatest lustre. If you did not meet there the favourites of fortune; authors whose works bore the highest price in Paternoster Row, and who glittered in the circles of fashion; you might find those who had thought most deeply, felt most keenly, and were destined to produce the most lasting influences on the literature and manners of the age. There Hazlitt, sometimes kindling into fierce passion at any mention of the great reverses of his idol Napoleon, at other times bashfully enunciated the finest criticism on art; or dwelt with genial iteration on a passage in Chaucer; or, fresh from the theatre, expatiated on some new instance of energy in Kean, or reluctantly conceded a greatness to Kemble; or detected some popular fallacy with the fairest and the subtlest reasoning. There Godwin, as he played his quiet rubber, or benignantly joined in the gossip of the day, sat an object of curiosity and wonder to the stranger, who had been at one time shocked or charmed with his high speculation, and at another awe-struck by the force and graphic power of his novels. There Coleridge sometimes, though rarely, took his seat; and then the genial hubbub of voices was still; critics, philosophers, and

should be without." Yet Lamb was delighted with him. "Mister Moore," Mr. Crabb Robinson heard him call out not very distinctly across the table, "will you drink a glass of wine with me?" Then suiting the action to the word, he went on: "Mister Moore, till now I have always felt an antipathy, but now that I have seen you, I shall like you ever after."—F.

poets, were contented to listen; and toil-worn lawyers, clerks from the India House, and members of the Stock Exchange, grew romantic while he spoke. Lamb used to say that he was inferior then to what he had been in his youth; but I can scarcely believe it; at least there is nothing in his early writing which gives any idea of the richness of his mind so lavishly poured out at this time in his happiest moods. Although he looked much older than he was, his hair being silvered all over, and his person tending to corpulency, there was about him no trace of bodily sickness or mental decay, but rather an air of voluptuous repose. His benignity of manner placed his auditors entirely at their ease, and inclined them to listen delighted to the sweet, low tone in which he began to discourse on some high theme. Whether he had won for his greedy listener only some raw lad, or charmed a circle of beauty, rank, and wit, who hung breathless on his words, he talked with equal eloquence; for his subject, not his audience, inspired him. At first his tones were conversational; he seemed to dally with the shadows of the subject and with fantastic images which bordered it; but gradually the thought grew deeper, and the voice deepened with the thought; the stream gathering strength, seemed to bear along with it all things which opposed its progress, and blended them with its current; and stretching away among regions tinted with ethereal colours, was lost at airy distance in the horizon of the fancy. His hearers were unable to grasp his theories, which were indeed too vast to be exhibited in the longest conversation; but they perceived noble images, generous suggestions, affecting pictures of virtue, which enriched their minds and nurtured their

best affections. Coleridge was sometimes induced to recite portions of "Christabel," then enshrined in manuscript from eyes profane, and gave a bewitching effect to its wizard lines. But more peculiar in its beauty than this, was his recitation of Kubla Khan. As he repeated the passage—

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw:
> It was an Abyssinian maid,
> And on her dulcimer she played,
> Singing of Mont Abora!

his voice seemed to mount, and melt into air, as the images grew more visionary, and the suggested associations more remote. He usually met opposition by conceding the point to the objector, and then went on with his high argument as if it had never been raised: thus satisfying his antagonist, himself, and all who heard him; none of whom desired to hear his discourse frittered into points, or displaced by the near encounter even of the most brilliant wits. The first time I met him, which was on one of those Wednesday evenings, we quitted the party together between one and two in the morning; Coleridge took my arm and led me nothing loath, at a very gentle pace, to his lodgings, at the Gloucester Coffee House, pouring into my ear the whole way an argument by which he sought to reconcile the doctrines of Necessity and Free-will, winding on through a golden maze of exquisite illustration; but finding no end, except with the termination of that (to me) enchanted walk. He was only then on the threshold of the Temple of Truth, into which his genius darted its quivering and uncertain rays, but which he promised shortly to light

up with unbroken lustre. "I understood a beauty in the words, but not the words:"

> "And when the stream of sound,
> Which overflowed the soul, had passed away,
> A consciousness survived that it had left,
> Deposited upon the silent shore
> Of memory, images and gentle thoughts,
> Which cannot die, and will not be destroyed."

Men of "great mark and likelihood"—attended those delightful suppers, where the utmost freedom prevailed—including politicians of every grade, from Godwin up to the editor of the *New Times*.

Hazlitt has alluded *con amore* to these meetings in his Essay "On the Conversation of Authors,"[1] and

[1] The following is his graphic sketch of these evenings:—"This was formerly the case at Lamb's, where we used to have many lively skirmishes at his Thursday evening parties. I doubt whether the small-coal man's musical parties could exceed them. O! for the pen of John Buncle to consecrate a *petit souvenir* to their memory. There was Lamb himself, the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men! He always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences, as he does. His jests scald like tears, and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hairbrained view of home-felt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! And in our flowing cups many a good name and true was freshly remembered. Recollect, most sage and critical reader, that in all this I was but a guest. Need I go over the names. They were the old everlasting set—Milton and Shakespeare, Pope and Dryden, Steele and Addison, Swift and Gay, Smollett, Sterne, Richardson; Hogarth's prints, Claude's landscapes; the cartoons at Hampton Court, and all those things, that, having once been, must ever be. The Scotch novels had not then been

has reported one of the most remarkable discussions which graced them in his Essay "On Persons one would wish to have seen," published by his son, in the two volumes of his remains, which with so affectionate a care he has given to the world. In this was a fine touch of Lamb's pious feeling, breaking through his fancies and his humours, which Hazlitt has recorded, but which cannot be duly appreciated, except by those who can recall to memory the suffused eye and quivering lip with which he stammered out a reference to the name which he would not utter. "There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," said he. "If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise to meet him; but if

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heard of, so we said nothing about them. In general we were hard upon the moderns. The author of the "Rambler" was only tolerated in Boswell's Life of him; and it was as much as any one could do to edge in a word for Junius. Lamb could not bear Gil Blas. This was a fault. I remember the greatest triumph I ever had was in persuading him, after some years' difficulty, that Fielding was better than Smollett. On one occasion he was for making out a list of persons famous in history that one would wish to see: at the head of whom were Pontius Pilate, Sir Thomas Brown, and Dr. Faustus; but we black-balled most of his list. With what a gusto would he describe his favourite authors, Donne, or Sir Philip Sidney, and call their most crabbed passages delicious! He tried them on his palate as epicures taste olives, and his observations had a smack in them like a roughness on the tongue. With what discrimination he hinted a defect in what he admired most; as in saying that the display of the sumptuous banquet in 'Paradise Lost' was not in true keeping, as the simplest fare was all that was necessary to tempt the extremity of hunger; and stating that Adam and Eve in 'Paradise Lost' were too much like married people. There was no fuss or cant about him, nor were his sweets or his sours ever diluted with one particle of affectation. I cannot say that the party at Lamb's were all of one description. There were honorary members—lay brothers. *Wit and good fellowship* was the motto inscribed over

That Person were to come into it, we should all fall down and kiss the hem of his garment."

Lamb's intention of spending the rest of his days in the Middle Temple was not to be realized. The inconvenience of being in chambers began to be felt as he and his sister grew older, and in the autumn of this year they removed to lodgings in Russell Street, Covent Garden, the corner house. Being now in the immediate neighbourhood of the theatres, Lamb renewed the dramatic associations of his youth, which the failure of one experiment had not chilled. Although he rather loved to dwell on the recollections of the actors who had passed from the stage, than to mingle with the happy crowds who hailed the succes-

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the door. When a stranger came in, it was not asked, 'Has he written anything.' We were above that pedantry, but we waited to see what he could do. If he could take a hand at picquet he was welcome to sit down; . . . we abhorred insipidity, affectation, and fine gentlemen. There was one of our party who never failed to mark 'two for his nob' at cribbage, and he was thought no mean person. This was Ned Philips, and a better fellow in his way breathes not. There was Godwin, who asserted some incredible matter of fact as a likely paradox, and settled all controversies by an *ipse dixit*, a *fiat* of his brain—the Baron Munchausen of politics and practical philosophy. There was Captain Burney, who had you at a disadvantage by never understanding you. There was Jem White, the author of 'Falstaff's Letters,' who the other day left this dull world to go in search of more kindred spirits, 'turning like the latter end of a lover's lute.' There was Ayrton, who sometimes dropped in, the Will Honeycomb of our set; and Mr. Reynolds, who being of a quiet turn, loved to hear a noisy debate. An utterly misinformed person might have supposed this a scene of vulgar confusion and uproar. While the most critical question was pending, while the most difficult problem in philosophy was solving, Philips cried out, 'That's game!' and Martin Burney muttered a quotation over the last remains of a veal pie at a side-table." —*Plain Speaker*, i., p. 79.—F.

sive triumphs of Mr. Kean, he formed some new and steady theatrical attachments. His chief favourites of this time were Miss Kelly, Miss Burrell of the Olympic, and Munden. The first, then the sole support of the English Opera, became a frequent guest in Great Russell Street, and charmed the circle there by the heartiness of her manners, the delicacy and gentleness of her remarks, and her unaffected sensibility, as much as she had done on the stage. Miss Burrell, a lady of more limited powers, but with a frank and noble style, was discovered by Lamb on one of the visits which he paid, on the invitation of his old friend Elliston, to the Olympic, where the lady performed the hero of that happy parody of Moncrieff's, "Giovanni in London." To her Lamb devoted a little article, which he sent to the *Examiner*, in which he thus addresses her:—"But Giovanni, free, fine, frank-spirited, single-hearted creature, turning all the mischief into fun as harmless as toys, or children's *make believe*." Miss Burrell soon married a person named Gould, and disappeared from the stage. To Munden in prose, and Miss Kelly in verse, Lamb has done ample justice.

Among the frequent guests in Inner Temple Lane was Mr. Ayrton, the director of the music at the Italian Opera. At this time Lamb's interest was strongly excited for Mr. Kenney, on the production of his comedy entitled "A Word to the Ladies." He had engaged to contribute the prologue; but the promise pressed hard upon him, and he procured the requisite quantity of verse from a very inferior hand. Kenney, who had married Holcroft's widow,[1] had

[1] Daughter of Mercier, the author of the "Tableau de Paris."—F.

more than succeeded to him in Lamb's regards. Holcroft had considerable dramatic skill; great force and earnestness of style, and noble sincerity and uprightness of disposition; but he was an austere observer of morals and manners; and even his grotesque characters were hardly and painfully sculptured; while Kenney, with as fine a perception of the ludicrous and the peculiar, was more airy, more indulgent, more graceful, and exhibited more frequent glimpses of "the gayest, happiest attitude of things." The comedy met with less success than the reputation of the author and brilliant experience of the past had rendered probable, and Lamb had to perform the office of comforter, as he had done on the more unlucky event to Godwin.

Another of Lamb's new acquaintances was Mr. Charles Ollier, a young bookseller of considerable literary talent, which he has since exhibited in the original and beautiful tale of "Inesilla," who proposed to him the publication of his scattered writings in a collected form. Lamb acceded; and nearly all he had then written in prose and verse, were published this year by Mr. Ollier and his brother, in two small and elegant volumes, of which early copies were despatched to Southey and Wordsworth.

The widening circle of Lamb's literary friends also embraced additional authors and actors,—famous, or just bursting into fame. He welcomed in the author of the "Dramatic Scenes," who chose to appear in print as Barry Cornwall, a spirit most congenial with his own in its serious moods—one whose genius he had assisted to impel towards its kindred models, the great dramatists of Elizabeth's time, and in whose success he received the first and best reward of the

efforts he had made to inspire a taste for these old masters of humanity. Mr. Macready, who had just emancipated himself from the drudgery of representing the villains of tragedy, by his splendid performance of Richard, was introduced to him by his old friend Charles Lloyd, who had visited London for change of scene, under great depression of spirits. Lloyd owed a debt of gratitude to Macready which exemplified the true uses of the acted drama with a force which it would take many sermons of its stoutest opponents to reason away. A deep gloom had gradually overcast his mind, and threatened wholly to encircle it, when he was induced to look in at Covent Garden Theatre, and witness the performance of "Rob Roy." The picture which he then beheld of the generous outlaw,—the frank, gallant, noble bearing,—the air and movements, as one "free of mountain solitudes," —the touches of manly pathos and irresistible cordiality, delighted and melted him, won him from his painful introspections, and brought to him the unwonted relief of tears. He went home "a *gayer* and a wiser man;" returned again to the theatre, whenever the healing enjoyments could be renewed there; and sought the acquaintance of the actor who had broken the melancholy spell in which he was enthralled, and had restored the pulses of his nature to their healthful beatings.[1] The year 1820 gave Lamb an

[1] In Mr. Macready's recently published Diary, is given a fuller account of this curious incident. It seems that shortly after the performance he received a sonnet, which, in some fervent lines, told him what had been the effect of his acting:—

> "That one whose brain was dry—whose dearest rest
> Was death's pale dwelling—he hath felt it start,
> Nature's first gush for years—at thy behest."

interest in Macready beyond that which he had derived from the introduction of Lloyd, arising from the power with which he animated the first production of one of his oldest friends — "Virginius." Knowles had been a friend and disciple of Hazlitt from a boy, and Lamb had liked and esteemed him as a hearty companion; but he had not guessed at the extraordinary dramatic power which lay ready for kindling in his brain, and still less at the delicacy of tact with which he had unveiled the sources of the most profound affections. Lamb had almost lost his taste for acted tragedy, as the sad realities of life had pressed more nearly on him; yet he made an exception in favour of the first and happiest part of "Virginius," those paternal scenes, which stand alone in the modern drama, and which Macready informed with the fulness of a father's affection.

This perpetual influx of visitors whom he could not repel, whom indeed he was always glad to welcome, but whose visits unstrung him, induced him to take lodgings at Dalston, to which he occasionally retired when he wished for repose.[1] The deaths of some

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Not long after he and the author met, when Lloyd told him what had been his sufferings for four years, "a torpor of feeling, and, as it were, a numbness of his faculties." But the relief, as might be expected, was only temporary, and he soon sank back into a state of incurable monomania. Macready met Lamb at Talfourd's, and was particularly "arrided" by his speech, "that the last breath he drew he wished might be through a pipe, and exhaled in a pun."—F.

[1] In 1820 Charles Lamb and his sister paid a visit to Cambridge. "It was a pleasure," says the amiable Crabb Robinson, who met them there, "to be with them. All Lamb's enjoyments are so pure and hearty."—F.

who were dear to him cast a melancholy tinge on his mind, as may be seen in his letters.[1]

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[1] That some such retreat was called for, is plain from the round of entertainments—if such it may be called—in which brother and sister lived. Here was Mr. C. Robinson's experience of a week only. On November 13th he met Wordsworth at Lamb's; on the 18th he dined with them at Mr. Monkhouse's; on the 20th he was again at Lamb's to meet Wordsworth; on the next evening came Miss Kelly, Wordsworth again, Stoddart, Barry Cornwall, Talfourd, etc. This series of little festivities—duly celebrated with punch and supper—was wholly unsuited to such excitable natures: and though Sir T. Talfourd puts the matter as delicately as he can, there is no doubt but that flight became a matter of absolute necessity. Then a reaction about as prejudicial followed, and we find the unhappy Mary Lamb chafing against the restraint, and sighing for the old pleasures. "I had rather," she says in one of her letters, "live in Russell Street all my life, and never set my foot but on the London pavement, than be doomed always to enjoy the silent pleasures I now do. We go to bed at ten o'clock—late hours are life-shortening things; but I would rather run all risks, and sit every night—at some places I could name—*wishing in vain at eleven o'clock for the entrance of the supper-tray, than be always up and alive at eight o'clock breakfast*, as I am here." When staying at their Dalston Cottage they lost their brother, John Lamb, in November, 1821. Mr. Crabb Robinson, who visited them, found Mary Lamb "pale and thin," and just recovered from one of her attacks. "They feel their brother's loss, and seem softened by affliction, and to wish for society." Miss Wordsworth was surprised to see how much they took this affliction to heart, considering "there had been so little personal or family communication." —F.

CHAPTER VI.

[1820.]

The "London Magazine"—Wainwright's Story.

Lamb's association with Hazlitt in the year 1820 introduced him to that of the *London Magazine*, which supplied the finest stimulus his intellect had ever received, and induced the composition of the Essays fondly and familiarly known under the fantastic title of *Elia*. The adoption of this signature was purely accidental. His first contribution to the magazine was a description of the Old South Sea House, where Lamb had passed a few months' noviciate as a clerk, thirty years before, and of its inmates who had long passed away; and remembering the name of a gay, light-hearted foreigner, who fluttered there at that time, he subscribed his name to the essay. It was afterwards affixed to subsequent contributions; and Lamb used it until, in his "Last Essays of Elia," he bade it a last farewell.[1] Never was a periodical work commenced with happier auspices, numbering a list of contributors more original in thought, more fresh in spirit, more sportive in fancy, or directed by an editor better qualified by nature and study to preside, than this "London." There was Lamb, with humanity

[1] "To be pronounced *Ell*-ia," he writes to one of his correspondents —F.

ripened among town-bred experiences, and pathos matured by sorrow, at his wisest, sagest, airiest, *in*discreetest, best; Barry Cornwall, in the first bloom of his modest and enduring fame, streaking the darkest passion with beauty; John Hamilton Reynolds, lighting up with the wildest eccentricities and most striking features of many-coloured life with vivid fancy; and, with others of less note, Hazlitt, whose pen, unloosed from the chain which earnest thought and metaphysical dreamings had woven, gave radiant expression to the results of the solitary musings of many years. Over these contributors John Scott presided, himself a critic of remarkable candour, eloquence, and discrimination, unfettered by the dogmas of contending schools of poetry and art; apt to discern the good and beautiful in all; and having, as editor, that which Kent recognised as Lear, which subjects revere in kings, and boys admire in schoolmasters, and contributors should welcome in editors—*authority*;—not manifested in a worrying, teasing, intolerable interference in small matters, but in a judicious and steady superintendence of the whole; with a wise allowance of the occasional excesses of wit and genius. In this respect, Mr. Scott differed entirely from a celebrated poet,[1] who was induced, just a year after, to undertake the Editorship of the *New Monthly Magazine*, an office for which, it may be said, with all veneration for his poetic genius, he was the most unfit person who could be found in the wide world of letters—who regarded a magazine as if it were a long affidavit, or a short answer in Chancery, in which the absolute

[1] Thomas Campbell.—F.

truth of every sentiment and the propriety of every jest were verified by the editor's oath or solemn affirmation; who stopped the press for a week at a comma; balanced contending epithets for a fortnight; and, at last, grew rash in despair, and tossed the nearest, and often the worst article, "unwhipped of justice," to the impatient printer. Mr. Scott, indeed, was more fit to preside over a little commonwealth of authors than to hold a despotic rule over subject contributors; he had not the airy grace of Jeffrey by which he might give a certain familiar liveliness to the most laborious disquisitions, and shed the glancing light of fancy among party manifestoes;—nor the boisterous vigour of Wilson, riotous in power, reckless in wisdom, fusing the production of various intellects, into one brilliant reflection of his own master mind;—and it was well that he wanted these weapons of a tyranny which his chief contributors were too original and too sturdy to endure. He heartily enjoyed his position; duly appreciated his contributors and himself; and when he gave audience to some young aspirant for periodical honours at a late breakfast, amidst the luxurious confusion of newspapers, reviews, and uncut novels, lying about in fascinating litter, and carelessly enunciated schemes for bright successions of essays, he seemed destined for many years of that happy excitement in which thought perpetually glows in unruffled but energetic language, and is assured by the echoes of the world.

Alas! a few days after he thus appeared the object of admiration and envy to a young visitor, in his rooms in York Street, he was stretched on a bed of mental agony—the foolish victim of the guilty custom of a world which would have laughed at him for re-

garding himself as within the sphere of its opinion, if he had not died to shame it! In a luckless hour, instead of seeking to oppose the bitter personalities of *Blackwood* by the exhibition of a serener power, he rushed with spurious chivalry into a personal contest; caught up the weapons which he had himself denounced, and sought to unmask his opponents and draw them beyond the pale of literary courtesy; placed himself thus in a doubtful position in which he could neither consistently reject an appeal to the conventional arbitrament of violence nor embrace it; lost his most legitimate opportunity of daring the unhallowed strife, and found another with an antagonist connected with the quarrel only by too zealous a friendship; and, at last, met his death almost by lamentable accident, in the uncertain glimmer of moonlight, from the hand of one who went out resolved not to harm him![1] Such was the melancholy result

[1] "Mr. Lockhart, the reputed author of 'Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk,' having been violently and personally attacked in the *London Magazine*, came to London for the purpose of obtaining from Mr. Scott an explanation, an apology, or a meeting. Mr. Scott declined unless Mr. Lockhart would first deny that he was the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*. This Mr. Lockhart did not consider it necessary to do, and the correspondence ended with a note from Mr. Lockhart containing very strong and unqualified expressions touching Mr. Scott's personal character and courage. Scott published his account of the affair, and Mr. Lockhart published his, in which he stated that a copy had been sent to Mr. Scott. The copy circulated by Mr. Lockhart contained a denial of his being the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*. The copy sent to Scott did not contain this denial. Scott on this charged Mr. Lockhart with falsehood. The discrepancy between the copies arose from an oversight in printing the statement. But Scott's charge produced a reply from Mr. Christie, who had acted as Mr. Lockhart's friend in the affair, and Mr. Christie's reply led to a challenge from Scott, which was accepted. The parties met at Chalk

—first of a controversy too envenomed—and afterwards of enthralment in usages, absurd in all, but most absurd when applied by a literary man to a literary quarrel. Apart from higher considerations, it may befit a life destined for the listless excesses of gaiety to be cast on an idle brawl;—"a youth of folly, an old age of cards" may be no great sacrifice to preserve the hollow truce of fashionable society; but for men of thought—whose minds are their possession, and who seek to live in the minds of others by sympathy with their thoughts—for *them* to hazard a thoughtful being because they dare not own that they prefer life to death—contemplation to the grave—the preparation for eternity to the unbidden entrance on its terrors, would be ridiculous if it did not become tragical. "Sir, I am a metaphysician!" said Hazlitt once, when in a fierce dispute respecting the colours of Holbein and Vandyke, words almost became things; "and nothing makes an impression upon me but abstract ideas;" and woeful, indeed, is the mockery when thinkers condescend to be duellists!

The Magazine did not perish with its Editor.[1]

Farm at nine o'clock at night, an unusual hour chosen on Mr. Scott's suggestion. Two shots were exchanged: Mr. Christie fired wide the first time, intentionally, but on the second fire his ball entered Mr. Scott's side, and the wound was fatal, Mr. Scott dying on the 27th."—*Life of Haydon.*—F.

[1] Mr. Procter furnishes some agreeable reminiscences of *The London.* "The *London Magazine* was established in January, 1820; the publishers being Messrs. Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, and its editor being Mr. John Scott, who had formerly edited *The Champion* newspaper, and whose profession was exclusively that of a man of letters.

"Mr. John Scott was the writer of several articles entitled 'The living Authors;' of a good many of the earlier criticisms; of some of the papers on politics, and of some which may be termed 'Contro-

Though its unity of purpose was lost, it was still rich in essays of surpassing individual merit; among

versial.' The essays on Sir Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Godwin, and Lord Byron, are from his hand. He contributed also the critical papers, on the writings of Keats, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, and Hazlitt. Mr. Hazlitt wrote all the articles which appear under the head 'Drama;' the twelve essays entitled 'Table Talk;' and the papers on Fonthill Abbey, and on the Angerstein pictures, and the Elgin marbles. Mr. Thomas Carlyle was author of the 'Life and Writings of Schiller,' in the eighth, ninth, and tenth volumes of the Magazine. Mr. de Quincy's contributions were the 'Confessions of an Opium Eater;' also various papers specified as being 'by the Opium Eater;' the essay on Jean Paul Richter, and papers translated from the German, or dealing with German literature. The Reverend Henry Francis Cary (the translator of Dante) wrote the Notices of the Early French poets; the addition to Orford's 'Royal and Noble Authors;' and, I believe, the continuations of Johnson's 'Lives of the Poets.' Mr. Allan Cunningham (the Scottish poet) was author of the 'Twelve Tales of Lyddal Cross,' of the series of stories or papers styled 'Traditional Literature,' and of various other contributions in poetry and prose. Mr. John Poole contributed the 'Beauties of the living Dramatists,' being burlesque imitations of modern writers for the stage, viz., Morton, Dibdin, Reynolds, Moncrieff, etc. Mr. John Hamilton Reynolds wrote, I believe, in every number of the periodical, after it came into the hands of Taylor and Hessey, who were his friends. All the papers with the name of Henry Herbert affixed were written by him; also the descriptive accounts of the Coronation, Greenwich Hospital, The Cockpit Royal, The Trial of Thurtell, etc. Mr. Thomas Hood fleshed his maiden sword here; and his first poems of length, 'Lycus the Centaur' and 'The Two Peacocks of Bedfont' may be found in the Magazine. Mr. George Darley (author of 'Thomas à Becket,' etc.), wrote the several papers entitled 'Dramaticles,' some pieces of verse, and the Letters addressed to 'The Dramatists of the Day.' Mr. Richard Ayton wrote 'The Sea Roamers,' the article on 'Hunting,' and such papers as are distinguished by the signature 'R. A.' Mr. Keats (the poet) and Mr. James Montgomery contributed verses. Sir John Bowring (I believe) translated into English verse the Spanish poetry, and wrote the several papers which appear under the head of 'Spanish Romances.' Mr.

which the masterly vindication of the true dramatic style by Darley; the articles of Cary, the admirable

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Henry Southern (editor of *The Retrospective Review*) wrote the 'Conversations of Lord Byron,' and 'The Fanariotes of Constantinople,' in the tenth volume. Mr. Walter Savage Landor was author of the Imaginary Conversation between Southey and Porson, in volume eight. Mr. Julius (Archdeacon) Hare reviewed the works of Landor in the tenth volume. Mr. Elton contributed many translations from Greek and Latin authors; from the minor poems of Homer, from Catullus, Nonnus, Propertius, etc. Messrs. Hartley Coleridge, John Clare, Cornelius Webb, Bernard Barton, and others sent poems, generally with the indicating name. I myself was amongst the crowd of contributors; and was author of various pieces, some in verse, and others in prose, now under the protection of that great Power which is called 'Oblivion.' Finally, the too celebrated Thomas Griffiths Wainwright contributed various fantasies, on Art and Arts; all or most of which may be recognised by his assumed name of Janus Weathercock. To show the difficulty of specifying the authorship of all the articles contributed,—even Mr. Hessey (one of the proprietors) was unable to do so; and, indeed, shortly before his death, applied to me for information on the subject. By the aid of the gentlemen who contributed—each his quota—to the *London Magazine*, it acquired much reputation, and a very considerable sale. During its career for five years, it had, for a certain style of essay, no superior (scarcely an equal) amongst the periodicals of the day. Yet the Magazine was successful, to an extent that preserved its proprietors from loss, perhaps not greatly beyond that point. On the death of Mr. John Scott, the Magazine, in July, 1821, passed into the hands of Messrs. Taylor and Hessey; the former being the gentleman who discovered the identity of Junius with Sir Philip Francis; the latter being simply very courteous to all, and highly respectable and intelligent.

"When Taylor and Hessey assumed the management of the *London Magazine*, they engaged no editor. They were tolerably liberal paymasters: the remuneration for each page of prose (not very laborious), being, if the writer were a person of repute or ability, one pound, and for each page of verse, two pounds. Charles Lamb received (very fitly) for his brief and charming essays, two or three times the amount of the other writers. When they purchased the Magazine, the proprietors

translator of Dante; and the "Confessions of an English Opium Eater," held a distinguished place. Mr. De Quincy, whose youth had been inspired by enthusiastic admiration of Coleridge, shown in contributions to "The Friend," not unworthy of his master, and substantial contributions of the blessings of fortune, came up to London, and found an admiring welcome from Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, the publishers into whose hands the *London Magazine* had passed. After the good old fashion of the GREAT TRADE, these genial booksellers used to assemble their contributors round their hospitable table in Fleet Street, where Mr. De Quincy was introduced to his new allies. Among the contributors who partook of their professional festivities, was a gentleman whose subsequent career has invested the recollection of his appearances in the familiarity of social life with fearful interest—Mr. Thomas Griffiths Wainwright. He was then a young man; on the bright side of thirty; with a sort of undress military air, and the conversation of a smart, lively, clever, heartless,

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opened a house, in Waterloo Place, for the better circulation of the publication.

"It was there that the contributors met once a month, over an excellent dinner, given by the firm, and consulted and talked on literary matters together. I do not know that many important matters were arranged, for the welfare of the Magazine, at these dinners; but the hearts of the contributors were opened, and with the expansion of the heart the intellect widened also.

"Amongst others, Charles Lamb came to most of these dinners, always dressed in black (his old snuff-coloured suit having been dismissed for years); always kind and genial; conversational, not talkative, but quick in repiy: eating little, and drinking moderately with the rest."

voluptuous coxcomb. It was whispered that he had been an officer in the Dragoons; had spent more than one fortune; and he now condescended to take a part in periodical literature, with the careless grace of an amateur who felt himself above it. He was an artist also; sketched boldly and graphically; exhibited a portfolio of his own drawings of female beauty, in which the voluptuous trembled on the borders of the indelicate; and seized on the critical department of the Fine Arts, both in and out of the Magazine, undisturbed by the presence or pretensions of the finest critic on Art who ever wrote—William Hazlitt. On this subject, he composed for the Magazine, under the signature of "Janus Weathercock," articles of flashy assumption—in which disdainful notices of living artists were set off by fascinating references to the personal appearance, accomplishments, and luxurious appliances of the writer, ever the first hero of his essay. He created a new sensation in the sedate circle, not only by his braided surtouts, jewelled fingers, and various neck-handkerchiefs, but by ostentatious contempt for everything in the world but elegant enjoyment. We lost sight of him when the career of the Magazine ended; and Lamb did not live to learn the sequel of his history. Lamb, who delighted to find sympathy in dissimilitude, fancied that he really liked him; took, as he ever did, the genial side of character; and, instead of disliking the rake in the critic, thought it pleasant to detect so much taste and goodnature in a fashionable *roué;* and regarded all his vapid gaiety, which to severer observers looked like impertinence, as the playful effusion of a remarkably guileless nature.

Thus, when expatiating in his list of choicest

friends in Elia's letter to Southey, he reckons W——, the light and warm, as light-hearted "Janus" of the *London;* and two years afterwards, adverting to the decline of the Magazine, in a letter to Mr. Barton, he persists in his belief of Wainwright's light-heartedness as pertinaciously as all the half-conscious dupes in Othello do in the assertion of Iago's honesty: "They have pulled down Hazlitt, P——, and their their best stay, kind, light-hearted W——, their 'Janus.'" In elucidation of this apparent lightness of heart, it will not be uninstructive to trace the remainder of this extraordinary person's history; for surely no contrast presented by the wildest romance between a gay cavalier, fascinating Naples or Palermo, and the same hero, detected as the bandit or demon of the forest, equals that which time has unveiled between what Mr. Wainwright *seemed*, and what *he was*, Mr. Wainwright having ceased to contribute to *The London* about the year 1825, when Lamb bestowed on him his parting eulogium, was scarcely seen in our literary circle, though he retained the acquaintance and regard of some of its members.

In the year 1830 he was residing at Linden House, Turnham Green, in the possession of which he had succeeded his uncle Dr. Griffiths, who for many years edited a monthly publication, and whose death had occurred about a year before, after a short illness, while Mr. Wainwright and his wife were visiting at his house on the occasion of her confinement with her only child. He acquired some property at the death of his uncle, by whose bounty, being early left an orphan, he had been educated; but his expensive tastes soon brought him to severe pecuniary embarrassments and the verge of ruin. His wife's mother,

who had died in Linden House after a short illness, left two daughters by Mr. Abercrombie her second husband, named Helen Frances Phœbe and Madeline—Mrs. Wainwright being the daughter of a former husband named Ward. These young ladies being left without provision, except a pension of £10 a year each, which had been granted to them as the destitute daughters of a meritorious officer, by the Board of Ordnance, were invited by Mr. Wainwright to visit him at Linden House, and at the beginning of 1830, with his wife and child formed his family.

About this time, he formed the remarkable scheme of procuring the eldest of the young ladies to effect insurances on her life, to the amount of many thousands of pounds, for the period of three or two years. Miss Helen Frances Phœbe Abercrombie was then a lovely woman, nearly of the age of twenty-one, which she attained 12th March, 1830, without expectations, except of some trifling possibility under a settlement, and, except the proceeds of the pension, without a shilling in the world; while Mr. Wainwright, who supplied the funds for this strange speculation, was in reality still poorer, being steeped in debt, impatient of privation, with ruin daily contracting its circle around him. The first proposal was made by Mr. Wainwright, on behalf of Miss Abercrombie, to the Palladium Insurance Office, on the 28th March, for £3000 for three years. On this occasion, Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright and Miss Abercrombie called together at the office, where the object of the insurance was stated to be to enable them to recover some property to which the young lady was entitled. This proposal was accepted, and on the 20th of April completed, by payment of the premium for one year

by the hand of Miss Abercrombie, then attended only by Mrs. Wainwright, and the delivery of the policy. On or about the same day, a similar insurance was effected with the Eagle Insurance Office for £3000, for the term of two years; and the premium for one year and stamp duty were paid by Miss Abercrombie in her sister's presence. In the following October four more policies were effected: with the Provident for £2000, with the Hope for £2000, with the Imperial for £3000, and with the Pelican for £5000, each on the life of Miss Abercrombie, and each for the period of two years; so that at the close of this month of October, the life of this poor girl, described by the actuary of the Provident as "a remarkably healthy, cheerful, beautiful young woman, whose life was one of a thousand," was insured to the amount of £18,000, as to £3000 for three years, and for the residue for two years only. Premiums for one year, amounting with the stamps to something more than £220, had been paid; the premiums which would be required to keep the policies on foot for a second year amounting to £200, and in the event of her surviving the brief terms of insurance, the whole money would be lost. On every visit to the offices, Miss Abercrombie was accompanied by Mrs. Wainwright, and the appearance of these two ladies together on such an errand, sometimes awakened scruples, which the apparent desirableness of the life for insurance to an office did not always silence. At the Imperial, it was suggested to Miss Abercrombie by Mr. Ingall, the actuary, that "as she only proposed to make the insurance for two years, he presumed it was to secure some property she would come into at the expiration of that time?" to which Mrs. Wainwright replied: "Not exactly so;

it is to secure a sum of money to her sister, which she will be enabled to do by other means if she outlives that time. But I don't know much of her affairs; you had better speak to her about it." On which Miss Abercrombie said, "That is the case." By what means the ladies were induced to make these statements can scarcely ever be guessed; it is certain that they were illusory. No reason existed for the poor penniless girl securing £3000 for her sister, in case of her own death within two years; nor was there the least chance of her receiving such a sum if living at the end of that period. The sum of £18,000 did not bound the limits of the speculation; for in the same month of October, a proposal to the Eagle to increase the insurance by the addition of £2000 was made and declined, and a proposal to the Globe for £5000, and a proposal to the Alliance for some further sum, met a similar fate. At the office of the Globe, Miss Abercrombie, who, as usual, was accompanied by Mrs. Wainwright, being asked the object of the insurance, replied, that "she scarcely knew, but she was desired to come there by her friends, who wished the insurance done." On being further pressed, she referred to Mrs. Wainwright, who said, "It is for some money matters that are to be arranged, but ladies don't know much about such things;" and Miss Abercrombie answered a question, whether she was insured in any other office, in the negative. At the Alliance, Helen was more severely tested by the considerate kindness of Mr. Hamilton, who received the proposal, and who was not satisfied by her statement, that a writ was depending in Chancery which would probably terminate in her favour, but that if she should die in the interim the property would go

into another family, for which contingency she wished to provide. The young lady, a little irritated at the question, said, "I supposed that what you had to inquire into was the state of my health, not the object of the insurance;" on which he informed her, "that a young lady such as she was, had come to the office two years before to effect an insurance for a short time, and that it was the opinion of the Company she had come to her death by unfair means." Poor Helen replied, "She was sure there was no one about her who would have any such object," Mr. Hamilton said, "Of course not," but added, "that he was not satisfied as to the object of the insurance, and unless she stated in writing what it was, and the Directors approved it, the proposal could not be entertained." The ladies retired, and the office heard no more of the proposal, nor of Miss Abercrombie, till they heard that she was dead, and that the payment of other policies on her life was resisted. Mr. Wainwright's affairs soon approached a crisis, for he had given a warrant of attorney in August, and a bill of sale on his furniture at Linden House, both of which had become absolute, and seizure under which he had postponed only till the 20th or 21st of December. Early in that month he left Linden House, and took furnished lodgings in Conduit Street, to which he was accompanied by his wife and her two half-sisters. On the 13th of that month, Miss Abercrombie called on a solicitor named Lys, to whom she was a stranger, and requested him to attest the execution of a will she desired to make, as she was going abroad: he complied, and she executed a will in favour of her sister Madeline, making Mr. Wainwright its executor. On the 14th, having obtained a form of assignment

from the office of the Palladium, she called on another solicitor, named Kirk, to whom she was also a stranger, to perfect for her an assignment of the policy of that office to Mr. Wainwright: this the solicitor did, by writing in ink over words pencilled in the handwriting of Mr. Wainwright, and witnessing her signature. On that evening Miss Abercrombie accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright and her sister to the play, as she had done the preceding evening, and partook of oysters, or lobsters, and porter, after their return. The weather was wet, she had walked home as she had done the evening before, and in the night suffered from illness, which was attributed to cold. She continued ill, however, and in a day or two Dr. Locock, who was called in by Mr. Wainwright, found her labouring under derangement of stomach, and prescribed for her simple remedies. She continued indisposed, but he entertained no serious apprehensions, until he was sent for on the 21st, when she died. On that morning a powder, which Dr. Locock did not recollect ever prescribing, was administered to her in jelly, and Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright quitted her to take a long walk for some hours. Soon after their departure she was seized with violent convulsions; the physician was sent for, and was shocked by her condition, and by her exclaiming, "Oh, Doctor! these are the pains of death!" He administered proper remedies for pressure on the brain, under which she was then labouring. The symptoms subsided, and he left her in a state of composure. The convulsions, however, soon returned with increased violence; the attendant, in alarm, called in the assistant of a neighbouring apothecary in the emergency; the young man did for her the best that human skill

could devise, but all assistance was in vain, and before Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright returned from their walk, she was dead. An examination of the body took place with Mr. Wainwright's ready concurrence, which, in Doctor Locock's apprehension, left no reason to attribute the death to other than natural causes. Its immediate cause was obviously pressure on the brain, and the sums amounting to £18,000, insured on her life, became payable to Mr. Wainwright as her executor, though except as to two of the policies—those of the Palladium and the Hope—which had been assigned to him by poor Helen, apparently, at least, for the benefit of the sister.

Suspicion, however, was excited, the offices resisted the claim. Mr. Wainwright left England for France, where he spent several years; and after delays occasioned chiefly by proceedings in Equity, the question of the validity of the policies was tried, before Lord Abinger, on the 29th of June, 1835, in an action by Mr. Wainwright as executor of Miss Abercrombie on the Imperial's policy. Extraordinary as were the circumstances under which the defence was made, it rested on a narrow basis—on the allegation that the insurance was not, as it professed to be, that of Miss Abercrombie for her own benefit, but the insurance of Mr. Wainwright, effected at his cost for some purpose of his own, and on the falsehood of representations she had been induced to make in reply to inquiries as to insurances in other offices. The cause of her death, if the insurance was really hers, was immaterial; and though surely not immaterial in the consideration of the question, whether the insurance was her's or Mr. Wainwright's, was thrown out of the case by Lord Abinger. That accomplished Judge,

who had been the most consummate advocate of his time, disposed always to pleasurable associations, shrunk in a Civil Court from inquiries which, if they had been directly presented on a criminal charge, would have compelled his serious attention, stated that there was no evidence of other crime than fraud, and intimated that the defence had been injured by a darker suggestion. The jury, partaking of the Judge's disinclination to attribute the most dreadful guilt to the plaintiff on a Nisi Prius record, and perhaps scarcely perceiving how they could discover for the imputed fraud an intelligible motive without it, were unable to agree, and were discharged without giving a verdict. The cause was tried again, before the same Judge, on the 3rd December following; when the counsel for the defence, following the obvious inclination of the Bench, avoided the most fearful charge, and obtained a verdict for the Office without hesitation, sanctioned by Lord Abinger's proffered approval to the jury. In the meantime, Mr. Wainwright, leaving his wife and child in London, had acquired the confidence and enjoyed the hospitality of an English officer residing at Boulogne. While he was thus associated, a proposal was made to the Pelican Office to insure the life of his host for £5000; which, as the medical inquiries were satisfactorily answered, was accepted. The Office, however, received only one premium, for the life survived the completion of the insurance only a few months, falling after a very short illness. Under what circumstances Mr. Wainwright left Boulogne after this event is unknown. He became a wanderer in France; and being brought under the notice of the Correctional Police as passing under a feigned name, was arrested.

In his possession was found the vegetable poison called strychnine, which leaves little trace of its passage in the frame of its victim; and which, though unconnected with any specific charge, increased his liability to temporary restraint, and led to a six months' incarceration at Paris. After his release, he returned to revisit London, where, in June, 1837, soon after his arrival, he was met in the street by Forrester the police officer, who had identified him in France, and was committed for trial on a charge of forgery.

The offence for which Mr. Wainwright was thus apprehended was not very heinous of its kind, but his guilt was clear, and the punishment at that time capital. It consisted in the forgery of the names of his own trustees to five successive powers of attorney to sell out stock settled on himself and his wife before their marriage, which his exigencies from time to time had tempted him thus to realize. The Bank of England, by whom he was prosecuted, consented to forego the capital charges on his pleading guilty to the minor offence of uttering in two of the cases, which he did at the Old Bailey Sessions of July, 1837, and received sentence of transportation for life. In the meantime, proceedings were taken on behalf of Miss Abercrombie's sister Madeline, who had married a respectable bookseller named Wheatley, to render the insurances available for her benefit; which induced the prisoner to offer communications to the Insurance Offices which might defeat a purpose entirely foreign to his own; and which he hoped might procure him, through their intercession, a mitigation of the most painful severities incident to his sentence. In this expectation he was miserably disappointed; for though in pursuance of their promise the Directors of one of

the Offices made a communication to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the result, instead of a mitigation, was an order to place him in irons, and to send him to his place of punishment in a vessel about to convey three hundred convicts. Thus terminated the European career of the "kind and light-hearted Janus!" The time has not arrived for exhibiting all the traits of this remarkable person. Probably before it shall arrive the means of disclosing them will be lost, or the objects forgotten; but enough may be found disclosed in the public proceedings, from which we have taken thus far our narrative, to supply an instructive contrast between his outer and inner life; and yet more instructive indications of the qualities which formed the links of connection between them. The defect in his moral nature consisted, perhaps, chiefly in morbid self-esteem, so excessive as to overwhelm all countervailing feelings, and to render all the interests of others, all duties, all sympathies, all regards, subservient to the lightest efforts, or wishes, or enjoyments of the wretched idol. His tastes appreciated only the most superficial beauty; his vanities were the poorest and most empty; yet he fancied himself akin to greatness; and in one of his communications from Newgate, in his last hours of hope, he claimed for himself "a soul whose nutriment is love and its offspring art, music, divine song, and still holier philosophy." When writing from the hold of the convict-ship to complain of his being placed in irons, he said, "They think me a desperado. Me! the companion of poets, philosophers, artists, and musicians, a desperado! You will smile at this—no—I think you will *feel* for the man educated and reared as a gentleman, now the

mate of vulgar ruffians and country bumpkins." This shallow notion of being always "a gentleman" —one abstracted ever from conventional vulgarities— seems to have given him support in the extremity of wretchedness and infamy; the miserable reed he leaned on, not the ruling passion—but the ruling folly. "They pay me respect here, I assure you," said he to an acquaintance who visited him in Newgate; "they think I am here for £10,000;" and on some of the convicts coming into the yard with brooms to perform their compulsory labour of sweeping it, he raised himself up, pulled down his soiled wristbands, and exclaimed, with a faint hilarity—"You see those people, they are convicts like me; but no one dares offer me the broom!" Circumstances were indeed changed, but the *man* was the same as when he elaborated artistic articles for *The London*.[1] To

[1] It may not be uninteresting, nor wholly uninstructive, to place, in contrast with this person's deplorable condition, a specimen of his composition when "topping the part" of a literary coxcomb. The following is a portion of an article under the head of "Sentimentalities on the Fine Arts, by Janus Weathercock, Esq. To be continued when he is in the humour," published in the *London Magazine* for March, 1820:—"I (Janus) had made a tolerable dinner the other day at George's, and with my mind full of my last article, was holding up a *petit verre d'eau de vie de Dantzic* to the waxen candle, watching with scient eye the number of aureate particles, some swimming, some sinking quiveringly, through the oily and luscious liquor, as if informed with life, and gleaming like golden fish in the Whang-ho or Yellow River (which, by the way, is only yellow from its mud): so was I employed, when suddenly I heard the day of the month (the 15th) ejaculated in the next box. This at once brought me back from my delicious reverie to a sense of duty. 'Contributions must be forwarded by the 18th, *at the very latest*,' were the Editor's last words to Janus, and he is incapable of forgetting them. I felt my vigorous personal identity instantly annihilated, and resolved by some mystic process into a part of that unimaginable plurality in unity wherewithal editors,

the last he seemed to be undisturbed by remorse; shocked only at the indignities of the penal condition of one imbued with tastes so refined that all causes

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reviewers, and at present pretty commonly authors, clothe themselves when seated on the topmast tip of their topgallant masts, they pour forth their oracular dicta on the groaning ocean of London, spread out huge at their feet. Forthwith we (Janus) sneaked home alone, poked *in* the top of our hollow fire, which spouted out a myriad of flames, roaring pleasantly as, chasing one another, they rapidly escaped up the chimney; exchanged our smart tight-waisted stiff-collared coat for an easy chintz gown with pink ribbons; lighted our new elegantly-gilt French lamp, having a ground-glass globe painted with gay flowers and gaudy butterflies; hauled forth *Portfolio No.* 9, and established ourselves cosily on a Grecian couch! Then we (Janus) stroked our favourite tortoise-shell cat into a full and sonorous *purr*, and after that our nurse or maid-servant—a good-natured Venetian-shaped girl (having first placed on the table a genuine flask of as rich Montepulciano as ever voyaged from fair Italia)—had gently but firmly closed the door, carefully rendered air-tight by a gilt-leather binding (it is quite right to be particular), we indulged ourselves in a complacent consideration of the rather elegant figure we made, as seen in a large glass placed opposite our chimney-mirror, without, however, moving any limb except the left arm, which instinctively filled out a full cut-glass of the liquor before us, while the right rested inactively on the head of puss! 'It was a sight that turned all our gall into blood! Fancy, comfortable reader! Imprimis, a very good-sized room; item, a gay Brussels carpet covered with garlands of flowers; item, a fine *original* cast of the Venus de Medicis; item, some choice volumes in still more choice old French *moroquin* with water-tabby silk linings; item, some more volumes coated by the skill of Roger Payne and '*our* Charles Lewis;' item, a piano by Tomkinson; item, a Damascus sabre: item, one cat; item, a large Newfoundland dog, friendly to the cat; item, a few hot-house plants on a white marble slab; item, a delicious melting love-painting by Fuseli; and last, not least, in our dear love, *we*, myself, (Janus!) Each and the whole seen by the Correggio-kind of light breathed as it were through the painted glass of the lamp!!! Soothed into that amiable sort of self-satisfaction so necessary to the bodying out those deliciously voluptuous ideas, perfumed with languor, which occasionally swim and undulate like gauzy clouds over the brain of the

ought to give way to their indulgence. This vanity, nurtured by selfishness and unchecked by religion,

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most cold-blooded men, we put forth our hand to the folio which leant against a chair by the sofa's side, and at haphazard extracted thence Lancret's charming 'Repas Italien,' T. P. le Bas. Sculp.:—

"'A summer party in the greenwood shade,
With lutes prepared and cloth on herbage laid,
And ladies' laughter coming thro' the air.'

"L. HUNT'S 'Rimin.'

This completed the charm. We immersed a well-seasoned prime pen into our silver inkstand three times, shaking off the loose ink again lingeringly. While holding the print fast in our left hand, we perused it with half-shut eyes, dallying awhile with our delight."

This last portion of the strange history of Wainwright's, which has an almost ghastly interest, was suppressed by Sir T. Talfourd in the later editions of his work, perhaps from a wish not to further prejudice the condition of the criminal, then undergoing his sentence of transportation. In Mr. Dickens' *All the Year Round*, appeared a fuller account of his infamous career, from which I take the following:—

"On the night the Norfolk gentleman in difficulties at Boulogne died, Wainwright had insisted on making his friend's coffee, and passed poison into the sugar. The poisoner had succeeded before this in winning the affections of his friend's daughter, and gaining a supreme influence in the house.

"Being asked in the jail how he could find it in his heart to murder the trusting girl who had so confided in him (meaning Miss Abercrombie), he reflected for a moment, and then returned, with a cool laugh: 'Upon my soul I don't know—unless it was that her legs were too thick.'

"A more insupportable scoundrel never troubled this earth. He had kept a Diary. The insurance offices, by the masterly stroke of sending to a French inn where he had lived, paying the bill he had left unpaid, and demanding the effects he had left there, obtained possession of it. Description of this demoniacal document cannot be attempted, but it contained a kind of index to the details of his various crimes, set forth with a voluptuous cruelty and a loathsome exultation worthy of the diseased vanity of such a masterpiece of evil.

"In 1842, the dandy convict was admitted as in-patient of the General Hospital in Hobart Town, where he remained some years. Whilst

became a disease, perhaps amounting to *monomania*, and yielding one lesson to repay the world for his

an inmate of the hospital, he forwarded to the Governor, Sir Eardley E. Wilmot, the following memorial. It is too characteristic of the man not to be given. The gilt has all gone now. The Governor's minute on the memorial is very laconic:—'A T. L. (ticket-of-leave) would be contrary to Act of Parlt. T. L. refused. *3rd class wages received?* —E. E. W."

" 'To His Excellency, Sir John Eardley Wilmot, Bart., Lieut.-Governor of Van Dieman's Land, etc. etc.

" 'The humble petition of T. Griffiths Wainwright, praying the indulgence of a ticket-of-leave.

" 'To palliate the boldness of this application he offers the statement ensuing. That *seven* years past he was arrested on a charge of forging and acting on a power of attorney to sell stock *thirteen years previous*. Of which (though looking for little credence) he avers his entire innocence. He admits a knowledge of the actual committer, gained though some years after the fact. Such, however, were their relative positions, that to have disclosed it would have made him infamous where any human feeling is manifest. Nevertheless, by his counsel's direction, he entered the plea NOT *Guilty*, to allow him to adduce the *"circonstance attenuante,"* viz., that the money (£5200) appropriated was, without quibble, *his own*, derived from his parents. An hour before his appearing to plead he was trepanned (through the just but deluded Governor of Newgate) into withdrawing his plea, by a promise, in such case, of a punishment merely nominal. The same *purporting* to issue from y^e^ *Bank Parlour*, but in fact from the agents of certain *Insurance Companies* interested to a heavy amount (£16,000) in compassing his legal non-existence. He pleaded guilty—and was forthwith hurried, stunned with such ruthless perfidy, to the hulks at Portsmouth, and thence in *five days* aboard the Susan, sentenced to Life in a land (to him) a moral sepulchre. As a ground for your mercy he submits with great deference his foregone condition of life during 43 years of freedom. A *descent*, deduced, through family tradition and *Edmondson's Heraldry*, from a stock not the least honoured in Cambria. Nurtured with all appliances of ease and comfort—schooled by his relative, the well-known philologer and bibliomaniac, Chas. Burney, D.D., brother to Mdme. D'Arblay, and the companion of COOKE. Lastly, such a modest competence as afforded the *mental* necessaries of Literature, Archæology, Music and the Plastic Arts; while his pen and brush in-

existence: that there is no state of the soul so dangerous as that in which the vices of the sensualist

troduced him to the notice and friendship of men whose fame is European. The Catalogues of Somerset House Exhibitions, the *Literary Pocket Book*, indicate his earlier pursuits, and the MS. left behind in Paris, attest at least his industry. Their titles imply the objects to which he has, *to this date*, directed all his energies: "A Philosophical Theory of Design, as concerned with the Loftier Emotions, showing its deep action on Society, drawn from the Phidean-Greek and early Florentine Schools" (the result of seventeen years' study), illustrated with numerous plates, executed with conscientious accuracy, in one vol. atlas folio. "An Æsthetic and Psychological Treatise on the Beautiful; or the Analogies of Imagination and Fancy, as exerted in Poesy, whether Verse, Painting, Sculpture, Music, or Architecture;" to form four vols. folio, with a profusion of engravings by the first artists of Paris, Munich, Berlin, Dresden, and Wien. "An Art-Novel," in three vols., and a collection of "Fantasie, Critical Sketches, etc., selected partly from *Blackwood*, the *Foreign Review*, and the *London Magazine*." All these were nearly ready for, *one* actually at *press*. Deign, your Excellency! to figure to yourself my *actual* condition during seven years; without *friends*, *good name* (the breath of life) or *art* (the fuel to it with *me*), tormented at once by memory and ideas struggling for outward form and realization, barred up from increase of knowledge, and deprived of the exercise of profitable or even of *decorous* speech. Take pity, your Excellency! and grant me the power to shelter my eyes from Vice in her most revolting and sordid phase, and my ears from a jargon of filth and blasphemy that would outrage the cynism (*sic*) of Parny himself. Perhaps this clinging to the lees of a vapid life may seem as *base*, *unmanly*, arguing rather a plebeian, than a liberal and gentle descent. But, your Excellency! the wretched *Exile* has a child!—and *Vanity* (sprung from the praise of Flaxman, *Charles Lamb*, Stothard, Rd. Westall, *Delaroche*, *Cornelius*, Lawrence, and the god of his worship, Fuseli) whispers that the *follower of the Ideal might* even yet achieve another reputation than that of a *Faussaire*. Seven years of steady demeanour may in *some* degree promise that no indulgence shall ever be abused by your Excellency's miserable petitioner, "'T. G. Wainwright.'

"Discharged from the hospital, the elegant-mannered poisoner set up as an artist at Hobart Town, where sketches by him still exist. His

are envenomed by the groyelling intellect of the scorner.

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conversation to lady-sitters was often indelicate. A writer in a Melbourne paper, 6th July, 1841, says of this dangerous and abandoned wretch: 'He rarely looked you in the face. His conversation and manners were winning in the extreme; he was never intemperate, but nevertheless of grossly sensual habits, and an opium-eater. As to moral character, he was a man of the very lowest stamp. He seemed to be possessed by an ingrained malignity of disposition, which kept him constantly on the very confines of murder, and he took a perverse pleasure in traducing persons who had befriended him. There is a terrible story of his savage malignity towards a fellow-patient in the hospital, a convict, against whom he bore a grudge. The man was in a state of collapse—his extremities were already growing cold. Death had him by the throat. Wainwright's snakish eyes kindled with unearthly fire. He saw at once the fatal sign. He stole softly as a cat to the man's pallet, and hissed his exultation in his dying ear:

"'You are a dead man, you——. In four-and-twenty hours your soul will be in hell, and my arms will be up to that (touching his elbow) in your body, dissecting you.'

"Twice this delight of society attempted to poison people who had become obnoxious to him. Even in that polluted corner of the world the man was dreaded, hated, and shunned. His sole friend and companion was a cat, for which he evinced an extraordinary and sentimental affection. He had always been fond of cats. In 1852, this gentlemanly and specious monster was struck down in a moment, as with a thunderbolt, by apoplexy. He had survived his victims sixteen years."—*All the Year Round*, Jan. 5, 1867.

Mr. Forster (*Life of Dickens*, i. 161) thus describes a strange rencontre to which he was witness. "We made together," he says, "a circuit of nearly all the London prisons, and in coming to the prisoners under remand while going over Newgate, accompanied by Macready and Mr. Hablot Browne, were startled by a sudden tragic cry of 'My God! there is Wainwright!' In the shabby-genteel creature, with sandy disordered hair and dirty moustache, who had turned quickly round with a defiant stare at our entrance, looking at once mean and fierce, and quite capable of the cowardly murders he had committed, Macready had been terrified to recognise a man familiarly known to him in former years, and at whose table he had dined." Lord Lytton has drawn Wainwright in his "Lucretia."—F.

CHAPTER VII.

[1822-1823.]

Visit to Paris.—"Elia's" Letter to Southey.—Islington.

In the summer of 1822 Lamb and his sister visited Paris.[1] Soon after his return he became acquainted with the poet of the Quakers, Bernard Barton, who, like

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[1] Lamb and his sister set off on their journey on June 18th, accompanied by a French gentleman, and a nurse, in case Mary Lamb should be taken ill. She was a little nervous, but Lamb was in high spirits. Her courage seemed wonderful to Mr. Crabb Robinson, who furnished them with letters to friends in Paris. Their dismal foreboding, and wise provision, were to be unhappily justified by the event. "When at Amiens," says Mrs. Shelley in a letter, "poor Miss L. was taken ill in her usual way, and Lamb was in despair. He met, however, with some acquaintances, who got Miss L. into proper hands; and L. went on to Versailles, and stayed with the Kenneys." This is alluded to by Moore, who, in his light way, adds a painful touch, speaking of Miss Lamb as "the poor woman who went mad with him *in the diligence* on the way to Paris." These and other friends that Lamb met at Paris found him more reserved and silent than was his wont; which was not surprising, considering what was in his thoughts. Charles had to leave her in Paris, and returned to England. She found a warm friend in Mr. Payne, and Mr. Crabb Robinson arriving towards the end of August, devoted some days to visiting the sights of Paris with her. Charles Lamb could not speak a word of French, and Mr. Procter relates, that "he had once intended to ask the waiter for an egg (*œuf*), but called, in his ignorance for *eau-de-vie*, and that the mistake produced so pleasant a result, that his inquiries afterwards for *eau-de-vie* were very frequent."—F.

himself, was engaged in the drudgery of figures. The pure and gentle tones of the poems of his new acquaintance was welcome to Lamb, who had more sympathy with the truth of nature in modest guise than in the affected fury of Lord Byron, or the dreamy extravagancies of Shelley. Lamb had written in "Elia" of the Society of Friends with the freedom of one, who, with great respect for the principles of the founders of their faith, had little in common with a sect who shunned the pleasures while they mingled in the business of the world; and a friendly expostulation on the part of Mr. Barton led to such cordial excuses as completely won the heart of the Quaker bard. Some expression which Lamb let fall at their meeting in London, from which Mr. Barton had supposed that Lamb objected to a Quaker's writing poetry as inconsistent with his creed, induced Mr. Barton to write to Lamb on his return to Woodbridge, who replied to him. Encouraged by Lamb's kindness, Mr. Barton continued the correspondence, which became the most frequent in which Lamb had engaged for many years.

How bitterly Lamb felt his East-India bondage, has abundantly appeared from his letters during many years. Yet there never was wanting a secret consciousness of the benefits which it ensured for him, the precious independence which he won by his hours of toil, and the freedom of his mind, to work only "at its own sweet will," which his confinement to the desk obtained. This sense of the blessings which a fixed income, derived from ascertained duties, confers, was nobly expressed[1] in reference to a casual fancy in one

[1] See the letter of Lamb, Jan. 9th, 1823.—F.

of the letters of his fellow in clerkly as well as in poetical labours, Bernard Barton—a fancy as alien to the habitual thoughts of his friend, as to his own—for no one has pursued a steadier course on the weary way of duty than the poet whose brief dream of literary engrossment incited Lamb to make a generous amends to his ledger for all his unjust reproaches. The references to the booksellers have the colouring of fantastical exaggeration, by which he delighted to give effect to the immediate feeling; but making allowance for this mere play of fancy, how just is his advice—how wholesome for every youth who hesitates whether he shall abandon the certain reward of plodding industry for the splendid miseries of authorship![1]

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[1] It is singular that, some years before, Mr. Barton had received similar advice from a very different poet—Lord Byron. As the letter has never been published, and it may be interesting to compare the expressions of the two men so different on the same subject, I subjoin it here:—

"To Bernard Barton, Esq.

"St. James's Street, June 1, 1812.

"Sir,—The most satisfactory answer to the concluding part of your letter is, that Mr. Murray will republish your volume, if you still retain your inclination for the experiment, which I trust will be successful. Some weeks ago my friend Mr. Rogers showed me some of the stanzas in MS., and I then expressed my opinion of their merit, which a further perusal of the printed volume has given me no reason to revoke. I mention this, as it may not be disagreeable to you to learn, that I entertained a very favourable opinion of your powers before I was aware that such sentiments were reciprocal. Waving your obliging expressions as to my own productions, for which I thank you very sincerely, and assure you that I think not lightly of the praise of one whose approbation is valuable; will you allow me to talk to you candidly, not critically, on the subject of yours? You will not suspect me of a wish to discourage, since I pointed out to the publisher the propriety of complying with your wishes. I think more highly of your poetical talents than it would perhaps gratify you to hear

In the beginning of the year 1823, his Essays, collected in a volume, under the title of "Elia," were published by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, who had become the proprietors of the *London Magazine*. The book met with a rapid sale, while the magazine in which its contents had appeared, declined.

In the same year, Lamb appeared, for the first and only time of his life before the public, as an assailant: and the object of his attack was one of his oldest and fastest friends, Mr. Southey. It might, indeed, have been predicted of Lamb, if ever he *did* enter the arena of personal controversy, it would be with one who had obtained a place in his affection; for no motive less powerful than the resentment of friendship which

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expressed, for I believe, from what I observe of your mind, that you are above flattery. To come to the point, you deserve success; but we knew before Addison wrote his Cato, that desert does not always command it. But suppose it attained,

'You know what ills the author's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.'

Do not renounce writing, *but never trust entirely to authorship*. If you have a profession, retain it; it will be like Prior's fellowship, a last and sure resource. Compare Mr. Rogers with other authors of the day; assuredly he is among the first of living poets, but is it to that he owes his station in society, and his intimacy in the best circles?—no, it is to his prudence and respectability. The world (a bad one, I own) courts him because he has no occasion to court it. He is a poet, nor is he less so because he is something more. I am not sorry to hear that you were not tempted by the vicinity of Capel Lofft, Esq.,—though, if he had done for you what he has for the Bloomfields, I should never have laughed at his rage for patronising. But a truly well-constituted mind will ever be independent. That you may be so is my sincere wish; and if others think as well of your poetry as I do, you will have no cause to complain of your readers. Believe me,

"Your obliged and obedient servant,
"BYRON."

deemed itself wounded, could place him in a situation so abhorrent to his habitual thoughts. Lamb had, up to this time, little reason to love reviews or reviewers; and the connection of Southey with *The Quarterly Review*, while he felt that it raised, and softened, and refined the tone of that powerful organ of a great party, sometimes vexed him for his friend. His indignation also had been enlisted on behalf of Hazlitt and Hunt, who had been attacked in this work in a manner which he regarded as unfair; for the critics had not been content with descanting on the peculiarities in the style and taste of the one, or reprobating the political or personal vehemence of the other, — which were fair subjects of controversy, — but spoke of them with a contempt which every man of letters had a right to resent, as unjust. He had been much annoyed by an allusion to himself in an article on "Hazlitt's Political Essays," which appeared in the *Review* for November, 1819, as "one whom we should wish to see in more respectable company;" for he felt a compliment paid him at the expense of a friend, as a grievance far beyond any direct attack on himself. He was also exceedingly hurt by a reference made in an article on Dr. Reid's work "On Nervous Affections," which appeared in July, 1822, to an essay which he had contributed some years before to a collection of tracts published by his friend, Mr. Basil Montague, on the effect of spirituous liquors, entitled "The Confessions of a Drunkard." The contribution of this paper is a striking proof of the prevalence of Lamb's personal regards over all selfish feelings and tastes; for no one was less disposed than he to Montague's theory or practice of abstinence; yet he was willing to gratify his friend by this terrible picture of the extreme effects

of intemperance, of which his own occasional deviations from the right line of sobriety had given him hints and glimpses. The reviewer of Dr. Reid, adverting to this essay, speaks of it as a "fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance, which WE happen to know is a true tale." How far it was from actual truth the "Essays of Elia," the production of a later day, in which the maturity of his feeling, humour, and reason is exhibited, may sufficiently witness. These articles were not written by Mr. Southey;[1] but they prepared Lamb to feel acutely any attack from the *Review;* and a paragraph in an article in the number for July, 1823, entitled "Progress of Infidelity," in which he recognised the hand of his old friend, gave poignancy to all the painful associations which had arisen from the same work, and concentrated them in one bitter feeling. After recording some of the confessions of unbelievers of the wretchedness which their infidelity brought on them, Mr. Southey thus proceeded:—

"Unbelievers have not always been honest enough thus to express their real feelings; but this we know concerning them, that when they had renounced their birthright of hope, they have not been able to divest themselves of fear. From the nature of the human mind, this might be presumed, and in fact it is so. They may deaden the heart and stupify the conscience, but they cannot destroy the imaginative faculty. There is a remarkable proof of this in 'Elia's Essays,' a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling, to be as delightful as it is original. In that upon

[1] Dyer in his notice of Talfourd's work, in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* says that the review was written by Dr. Gooch, of Berners Street.—F.

'Witches and the other Night Fears,' he says, 'It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children; they can at most but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear or read of any distressing story, finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own "thick-coming fancies," and from his little midnight pillow this nurse child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the well-damned murderer are tranquillity.'—This poor child, instead of being trained up in the way he should go, had been bred in the ways of modern philosophy; he had systematically been prevented from knowing anything of the Saviour who said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;' care had been taken that he should not pray to God, nor lie down at night in reliance upon his good providence! Nor let it be supposed that terrors of imagination belong to childhood alone. The reprobate heart, which has discarded all love of God, cannot so easily rid itself of the fear of the devil; and even when it succeeds in that also, it will then create a hell for itself. We have heard of unbelievers who thought it probable that they should be awake in their graves; and this was the opinion for which they had exchanged a Christian's hope of immortality!"

The allusion in this paragraph was really, as Lamb was afterwards convinced, intended by Mr. Southey to assist the sale of the book. In haste, having ex-

punged some word which he thought improper,[1] he wrote, "*sounder* religious feeling," not satisfied with the epithet, but meaning to correct it in the proof, which unfortunately was never sent him.

Lamb saw it on his return from a month's pleasant holidays at Hastings, and expressed his first impression respecting it in a letter to his Quaker friend Barton. But his angry feeling was a little diverted by the execution of a scheme, rather suddenly adopted, of removing to a neat cottage at Islington, where Lamb first found himself installed in the dignity of a householder.[2] There an expostulation with Southey was

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[1] The "improper" word was *saner;* almost as awkward an allusion as Gifford's "poor maniac." Southey was horrified at what he had thus unconsciously written, and, as stated in the text, felt that any substitution would be more suitable, for the present at least. It must be said that the Essays are open to his very temperate criticism, as it cannot be denied that an under-current of amiable materialism runs through them. Here the "gentle-hearted" Charles was a little unreasonable; especially as he had allowed his friend and champion, Leigh Hunt, to make the same objection. "It is difficult," wrote the latter, in a number of the *Examiner*, in 1819, "from his works to collect whether Mr. Lamb is a *professed Christian or not.*" This is far more severe than Southey's "sounder religious feeling," which he had intended to soften away. Lamb wrote that he did not intend to retort, but he later changed his mind. Southey treated the attack with a sweetness that did infinite credit to his goodnature and good humour. "The letter, I remember," says Mr. Procter, "produced a strong sensation in literary circles, and Mr. Southey's acquaintances smiled, and his enemies rejoiced, at him."—F.

[2] Mr. George Daniel, the well known "D. G." of "Cumberland's Theatre," gives the following sketch of their life at Islington:—"He planted, pruned, and grafted. The rose was his favourite flower. 'Commend me,' he said, 'to the sparrows for what our friend Matnews calls in his "At Home," "irregular appropriation."' Seeing his growing fondness for birds, I offered him a beautiful bullfinch ensconced in a handsome cage. But he declined the present. 'Every

written, and appeared in the *London Magazine* for October, 1823. Lamb did not print it in any subse-

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song that is sung from its wiry prison,' said he, 'I could never flatter myself was meant for my ear; but rather a wistful note to the passing travellers of air that it were with them too! This would make me self-reproachful and sad. Yet I should be loth to let the little captive fly, lest, being unused to liberty, it should flutter itself to death, or starve.'

"And with what cheerfulness and gratitude he boasted that, for the first time in his life, he was the absolute lord and master of a whole house!—of an undisturbed and well-conducted home! I helped him to arrange his darling folios (Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, and Company!) in his pleasant dining-room; to hang in the best light his portraits of the poets, and his 'Hogarths' (the latter in old-fashioned ebony frames), in his newly-furnished drawing-room; and to adorn the mantelpieces with his Chelsea china shepherds and shepherdesses (family relics) which, like their owner, looked gayer and fresher for the change of air! He lived abstemiously, retired to rest at a reasonable hour (the midnight chimes had hitherto been more familiar to him than the lark's), and rose early. He took long summer walks in the neighbouring fields, and returned with a gathering of wild flowers. 'Every glimpse of beauty,' he said, 'was acceptable and precious to colour our pale lives.' He lamented the encroachments of 'horrid bricks and mortar' on the green sward.

"'Merrie Islington' was endeared to Charles Lamb by many tender recollections. Its rural walks, having been the scenes of his early and transient courtship, still retained for him an inexpressible charm. I have had many opportunities of friendly converse with the gifted woman, his sister, when her intellect was unclouded, and I have beheld her when that intellect was a ruin, and memory was alive only to the horrors of the past. Lamb, referring to his many domestic trials, once remarked to me, 'What a hard heart must mine be that these blows cannot break it!' Yet he might have remembered that when the darkness is deepest (midnight), the light is near.

"In the autumn of 1823, after dining at Colebrooke Cottage with him and Robert Bloomfield, I accompanied the two poets to the celebrated 'Queen Elizabeth's Walk' at Stoke Newington, which had become Lamb's favourite promenade in summer, for its wild flowers, upon which he could never tread with indifference; for its seclusion

quent collection of his essays; but I have reason to know that its publication will cause no painful feel-

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and its shade. He would watch the setting sun from the top of old Canonbury Tower, and sit contemplating the starry heavens (for he was a disciple of Plato, the great Apostle of the Beautiful!), until the cold night air warned him to retire. He was hand and glove with Goodman Symes, the then tenant of this venerable Tower, and a brother antiquary in a small way, who took pleasure in entertaining him in the oak-panelled chamber where Goldsmith wrote his 'Traveller,' and supped on butter-milk; pointing at the same time to a small coloured portrait of Shakespeare in a curiously carved gilt frame, which Lamb would look at lovingly, and which, through the kindness of a late friend, has since become mine. He was never weary of toiling up and down the steep, winding, narrow stairs of this suburban pile, and peeping into its sly corners and cupboards, as if he expected to discover there some hitherto hidden clue to its mysterious origin! The ancient hostelries of Islington and its vicinity he also visited. At the Old Queen's Head he puffed his pipe, and quaffed his ale out of the huge tankard. It was here that he chanced to fall in with that obese and burly figure of fun, Theodore Hook, who came to take a last look at this historical relic before it was pulled down. Hook accompanied him to Colebrook Cottage, which was hard by. During the evening Lamb (lightsome and lissom) proposed a race round the garden; but Hook (a *cochon à l'angraisse*, pursy and puffy, with a nose as radiant as the red-hot poker in a pantomime, and whose gait was like the hobblings of a fat goose attempting to fly) declined the contest, remarking that he could outrun nobody but 'the constable.' In the Sir Hugh Myddleton's Head 'Elia' would often introduce his own, for there he would be sure to find, from its proximity to Sadler's Wells, some play-going old crony with whom he could exchange a convivial 'crack,' and hear the celebrated Joe Grimaldi call for his 'namesake' (a tumbler!) of '*sweet and pretty*' (rum punch); challenging Boniface to bring it to a 'rummer!' Many a gleeful hour has he spent in this once rural hostelrie (since razed and rebuilt) in fumigation and fun. Though now a retired 'country gentleman,' luxuriating in the Persian's Paradise, 'something to see, and nothing to do,' he occasionally enjoyed the amusements of the town. He had always been a great sight-seer (as early as 1802 he piloted the Wordsworths through Bartlemy Fair), and the ruling passion still followed him to his Islingtonian

ings in the mind of Mr. Southey, and as it forms the only ripple on the kindliness of Lamb's personal and literary life. Indeed, the feeling with which it was received by him may be best described in his own words in a letter to Mr. Moxon. "On my part there was not even a momentary feeling of anger; I was very much surprised and grieved, because I knew how much he would condemn himself. And yet no resentful letter was ever written less offensively: his gentle nature may be seen in it throughout."[1] Southey was right in his belief in the revulsion Lamb's feelings would undergo, when the excitement under which he had written subsided; for although he would retract

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Tusculum. 'One who patronises,' said he, 'as I do, St. Bartlemy, must have a kindred inkling for my Lord Mayor's Show. They both possess the charm of antiquity.' Many a penny he has paid for a peep into a puppet-show, and after his final retirement to Edmonton in the Spring of 1833, he, in my company, revisited its fair in the September following, and renewed old acquaintanceship with the clowns and conjurors.

"This happy change of life and scene, this moral sunshine—(he had vanquished evil by resisting it)—produced the best effects upon his constitution (sickly frames are the homes of sickly fancies) and mind. Those spectre-haunted day and night dreams, (ghastly and grotesque!) that he so fearfully describes, no longer distracted him, and he lost that nervous irritability and restlessness which at one time threatened to become a permanent disease. His eyes recovered their lustre, his step its firmness, his pulse its regularity, and his appetite its tone. 'I have the stomach,' said he, 'of a Heliogabalus and the gorge of a garreteer!' He had not become a 'sadder'—for he was as full of felicitous absurdities as ever—but a 'wiser' man. All rejoiced at his rejuvenescence."—F.

[1] He also added: "My reply was to this effect, that if he had intimated to me that he was hurt by anything which had been said by me in the *Quarterly Review*, I would in the next number have explained or qualified it to his entire satisfaction; but I would never make sport for the Philistines by entering into a controversy with him."—F.

nothing he had ever said or written in defence of his friends, he was ready at once to surrender every resentment of his own. Southey came to London in the following month, and wrote proposing to call at Islington; and on the 21st of November Lamb thus replied:—

"E. I. H., 21st November, 1823.

"Dear Southey,—The kindness of your note has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed Q. R. had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the 'Confessions of a D——d' was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things that are not ill meant, may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead. I am in a public office, and my life is insured. I was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw, in a few obnoxious words, a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wish both magazine and review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time. "C. L."

Southey went to Colebrook-cottage, as proposed; the awkwardness of meeting went off in a moment; and the affectionate intimacy, which had lasted for almost twenty years, was renewed, to be interrupted only by death.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1823-1833.]

New Friends.—Lamb's Emancipation.—Enfield. —Edmonton.

Lamb was fond of visiting the Universities in the summer vacation, and repeatedly spent his holiday month at Cambridge with his sister. On one of these occasions they met with a little girl, who being in a manner alone in the world, engaged their sympathy, and soon riveted their affections. Emma Isola was the daughter of Mr. Charles Isola, who had been one of the esquire bedells of the University; her grandfather, Agostino Isola, had been compelled to fly from Milan, because a friend took up an English book in his apartment, which he had carelessly left in view.[1] This good old man numbered among his pupils, Gray the poet, Mr. Pitt, and, in his old age, Wordsworth, whom he instructed in the Italian language. His little grand-daughter, at the time when she had the

[1] He belonged to Emmanuel College, where he had taken a degree; and in a contest for the office of "Esquire Bedell," that took place in 1797, he was elected in preference to a very influential opponent, Mr. Ellis, Fellow of King's College. His father was highly esteemed, and in consequence there was a general desire to do something to advance the son. The latter was of shy and retiring manners, and for the sixteen years that he held his office, "was found ready to undertake every duty that did not include dining with a large party."—*Reminiscences of Cambridge.*—F.

good fortune to win the regard of Mr. Lamb, had lost both her parents, and was spending her holidays with an aunt, who lived with a sister of Mr. Ayrton, at whose house Lamb generally played his evening rubber during his stay at Cambridge. The liking which both Lamb and his sister took for the little orphan, led to their begging her of her aunt for the next holidays; their regard for her increased; she regularly spent the holidays with them till she left school, and afterwards was adopted as a daughter, and lived generally with them until 1833, when she married Mr. Moxon. Lamb was fond of taking long walks in the country, and as Miss Lamb's strength was not always equal to these pedestrian excursions, she became his constant companion in walks which even extended "to the green fields of pleasant Hertfordshire."

About this time, Lamb added to his list of friends, Mr. Hood, the delightful humorist;[1] Hone, lifted for

[1] An American lady, Mrs. Balmanno, describes a dinner at the Hoods, then living at Winchmore. Miss Kelly was of the party. Lamb, the lady noted, was "always playing pranks on his sister, who was dressed with quaker-like simplicity in a dove-coloured silk, with a transparent kerchief of snow-white muslin folded across her bosom." Her behaviour towards him was as of "some adoring disciple," her eyes being always fixed on his face: even when he was talking at the other end of the room, she would supply some word that he wanted. On this occasion he was in high spirits, sauntering about the room, his hands crossed behind his back, conversing in fits and starts, and all attention to Miss Kelly. Affecting to seek a dish that would be easy to carve, "so as to take the trouble off Mrs. Hood's hands," he selected a lobster salad, observing that that was the thing. When pressed to sing a song, he made a Latin speech, which was in favour, he said, of Mrs. Hood, but really in praise of the Salad.—*Memorials of T. Hood.*

Mr. Procter quotes the American N. P. Willis' account of his meeting with Charles and Mary Lamb:—"He had been invited by a gentle-

a short time into political fame by the prosecution of his Parodies, and the signal energy and success of his defence, but now striving by unwearied researches, which were guided by a pure taste and an honest heart, to support a numerous family; and Ainsworth, then a youth, who has since acquired so splendid a reputation as the author of "Rookwood" and "Crichton." Mr. Ainsworth, then resident at Man-

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man in the Temple, Mr. R—— (Robinson?) to meet Charles Lamb and his sister at breakfast. The Lambs lived at that time 'a little way out of London, and were not quite punctual.' At last, they enter; 'the gentleman in black small-clothes and gaiters, short and very slight in person; his head set on his shoulders with a thoughtful forward bent, his hair just sprinkled with grey, a beautiful deep set eye, an aquiline nose, and a very indescribable mouth. Whether it expressed most humour or feeling, goodnature or a kind of whimsical peevishness, or twenty other things which passed over it by turns, I cannot in the least be certain.' The guest places a large arm chair for Mary Lamb; Charles pulls it away, saying, gravely, 'Mary, don't take it; it looks as if you were going to have a tooth drawn.' Miss Lamb was at that time very hard of hearing, and Charles took advantage of her temporary deafness to impute various improbabilities to her, which however were so obvious as to render any denial or explanation unnecessary. Willis told Charles that he had bought a copy of the 'Elia' in America, in order to give to a friend. 'What did you give for it?' asked Lamb. 'About seven and sixpence.' 'Permit me to pay you that,' said Lamb, counting out the money with earnestness on the table; 'I never yet wrote anything that could sell. I am the publisher's ruin. My last poem won't sell,—not a copy. Have you seen it.' No; Willis had not. 'It's only eighteen-pence, and I'll give you sixpence toward it,' said Lamb; and he described where Willis would find it, 'sticking up in a shop window in the Strand.' Lamb ate nothing; but inquired anxiously for some potted fish, which Mr. R—— used to procure for him. There was none in the house; he therefore asked to see the cover of the pot which had contained it; he thought it would do him good. It was brought, and on it was a picture of the fish. Lamb kissed it, and then left the table and began to wander about the room, with an uncertain step."—F.

chester, excited by an enthusiastic admiration of Elia, had sent him some books.

In the year 1824, one of Lamb's last ties to the theatre, as a scene of present enjoyment, was severed. Munden, the rich peculiarities of whose acting he has embalmed in one of the choicest "Essays of Elia," quitted the stage in the mellowness of his powers. His relish for Munden's acting was almost a new sense; he did not compare him with the old comedians, as having common qualities with them, but regarded him as altogether of a different and original style. On the last night of his appearance, Lamb was very desirous to attend, but every place in the boxes had long since been secured, and Lamb was not strong enough to stand the tremendous rush, by enduring which, alone, he could hope to obtain a place in the pit; when Munden's gratitude for his exquisite praise anticipated his wish, by providing for him and Miss Lamb places in a corner of the orchestra, close to the stage. The play of the "Poor Gentleman," in which Munden played Sir Robert Bramble, had concluded, and the audience were impatiently waiting for the farce, in which the great comedian was to delight them for the last time, when my attention was suddenly called to Lamb by Miss Kelly, who sat with my party far withdrawn into the obscurity of one of the upper boxes, but overlooking the radiant hollow which waved below us, to our friend. In his hand, directly beneath the line of stage-lights, glistened a hugh porter-pot, which he was draining; while the broad face of old Munden was seen thrust out from the door by which the musicians enter, watching the close of the draught, when he might receive and hide the porten-

tous beaker from the gaze of the admiring neighbours. Some unknown benefactor had sent four pots of stout to keep up the veteran's heart during his last trial; and, not able to drink them all, he bethought him of Lamb, and without considering the wonder which would be excited in the brilliant crowd who surrounded him, conveyed himself the cordial chalice to Lamb's parched lips. At the end of the same farce, Munden found himself unable to deliver from memory a short and elegant address which one of his sons had written for him; but, provided against accidents, took it from his pocket, wiped his eyes, put on his spectacles, read it, and made his last bow. This was, perhaps, the last night when Lamb took a hearty interest in the present business scene; for though he went now and then to the theatre to gratify Miss Isola, or to please an author who was his friend, his real stage henceforth only spread itself out in the selectest chambers of his memory.[1]

A New Series of the *London Magazine* was commenced with the year 1825, in an increased size and price; but the spirit of the work had evaporated, as often happens to periodical works, as the store of rich fancies with which its contributors had begun, was in a measure exhausted. Lamb contributed another theatrical paper, a "Memoir of Liston," who occasionally enlivened Lamb's evening parties with his society; and who, besides the interest which he derived from his theatrical fame, was recommended to Lamb by the cordial admiration he expressed for Munden, whom he used to imitate in a style delight-

[1] "It was on this occasion," says Mrs. Cowden Clarke, "that Mary Lamb made the pun, 'Sic transit gloria Munden.'"—F

fully blending his own humour with that of his sometime rival. The "Memoir" is altogether a fiction, giving a ludicrously improbable account of his hero's pedigree, birth, and early habits.

This year is marked by one of the principal events in Lamb's uneventful life; his retirement from the drudgery of the desk, with a pension equal to two-thirds of his now liberal salary.[1] Freedom now gleamed upon him, and he became restless with the approach of deliverance. In February, 1825, he had completed his half century.

The first dawning hope of Lamb's emancipation was suggested in a note to Manning, proposing a visit, in which he refers to a certificate of non-capacity for hard desk-work, given by a medical friend (Dr. Tuthill). "I dare not hope," he says, "for fear of disappointment." The dream was realized—in April, 1825, the "world-wearied clerk" went home for ever—with what delight has been told in the elaborate raptures of his "Superannuated Man," and in the letters already published,[2] as well as how imperfectly the emancipation, so rapturously hailed, fulfilled its promises.

When the first enjoyment of freedom was over, it may be doubted whether Lamb was happier for the change. He lost a grievance on which he could

[1] He was treated with liberality, his retiring pension being fixed at £450; nine pounds being deducted to secure a provision for his sister —F.

[2] Some of his friends were already doubtful as to the result. Mr. C. Robinson wrote thus to Miss Wordsworth in June:—"Nor can I give you the report you so naturally looked for of his conduct at so great a change in his life. I do not doubt, I do not fear, that he will be unable to sustain the weight of chance desires. He has no desire to travel, . . . he has a passion for solitude, and hitherto finds that his retiring has not brought him leisure."—F.

lavish all the fantastical exaggeration of a sufferer without wounding the feelings of any individual, and perhaps the loss was scarcely compensated by the listless leisure which it brought him. Whenever the facile kindness of his disposition permitted, he fled from those temptations of society, which he could only avoid by flight; and his evening hours of solitude were hardly so sweet as when they were the reliefs and resting-places of his mind,—"glimpses which might make him less forlorn" of the world of poetry and romance. His mornings were chiefly occupied in long walks, sometimes extending to ten or twelve miles, in which at this time he was accompanied by a noble dog, the property of Mr. Hood, to whose humours Lamb became almost a slave,[1] and who, at last, acquired so portentous an ascendancy that Lamb

[1] The following allusion to Lamb's subservience to Dash is extracted from one of a series of papers, written in a most cordial spirit, and with great characteristic power, by the friend to whom Dash was assigned, which appeared in the *Court Magazine*. "During these interminable rambles—heretofore pleasant in virtue of their profound loneliness and freedom from restraint, Lamb made himself a perfect slave to the dog—whose habits were of the most extravagantly errant nature, for, generally speaking, the creature was half a mile off from his companion either before or behind, scouring the fields or roads in all directions, scampering up or down 'all manner of streets,' and leaving Lamb in a perfect fever of irritation and annoyance; for he was afraid of losing the dog when it was out of sight, and yet could not persuade himself to keep it *in* sight for a moment, by curbing its roving spirit. Dash knew Lamb's weakness in these particulars as well as he did himself, and took a dog-like advantage of it. In the Regent's Park, in particular, Dash had his master completely at his mercy; for the moment they got into the ring, he used to get through the paling on to the green sward, and disappear for a quarter or half an hour together, knowing perfectly well that Lamb did not dare move from the spot where he (Dash) had disappeared, till such time as he thought proper to show himself again. And they used to take this particular

requested his friend Mr. Patmore to take him under his care. At length the desire of assisting Mr. Hone, in his struggle to support his family by antiquarian research and modern pleasantry, renewed to him the blessing of regular labour; he began the task of reading through the glorious heap of dramas collected at the British Museum under the title of the "Garrick Plays," to glean scenes of interest and beauty for the work of his friend; and the work of kindness brought with it its own reward. "It is a sort of office work to me," says Lamb, in a letter to Barton; "hours ten to four, the same. It does me good. Man must have regular occupation that has been used to it."

But he now found that the cares of housekeeping pressed too heavily on Mary Lamb, and presently resolved to resign the dignity of a housekeeper for the independence of a lodger.[1] A couple of old dwellers in Enfield, hard by his cottage, had the good fortune to receive them. The first result of the experiment was happy, as it brought improved health to Mary Lamb; and in his letters addressed to Wordsworth, and to Gilman (intended also for his great guest, Coleridge), he described his landlord and landlady; expressing, also, with a fine solemnity, the feelings which still held him to Enfield.

While Lamb was residing at Enfield, the friendship which, in 1824, he had formed with Mr. Moxon, led to very frequent intercourse, destined, in after years,

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walk much oftener than they otherwise would, precisely because Dash liked it and Lamb did not." Under his second master, we learn from the same source, that Dash "subsided into the best bred and best behaved of his species."

[1] This "pressing too heavily," was, of course, connected with their usual affliction.—F.

to be rendered habitual, by the marriage of his friend with the young lady whom he regarded almost as a daughter. In 1828 Mr. Moxon, at the request of Mr. Hurst, of the firm of Hurst, Chance, and Co., applied to Lamb to supply an article for the "Keepsake," which he, always disliking the flimsy elegancies of the Annuals—sadly opposed to his own exclusive taste for old, standard, moth-eaten books—had declined.

In the spring of the year, Mr. Murray, the eminent publisher, through one of Lamb's oldest and most cherished friends, Mr. Ayrton, proposed to him another literary venture: that he should undertake a continuation of his specimens of the Old English Dramatists. The proposal was communicated by Mr. Ayrton to Lamb, then at Enfield, and then too painfully anxious for the recovery of Miss Isola, who was dangerously ill in Suffolk, to make the arrangement desired. His friend's letter he said, "revived some old images; Phillips,[1] (not the Colonel,) with his few hairs bristling at the charge of a revoke, which he declares impossible; the old Captain's significant nod over the right shoulder,[2] (was it not?)."

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[1] Edward Phillips, Esq., Secretary to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The "Colonel" alluded to was the Lieutenant of Marines who accompanied Capt. Cook in his last voyage, and was on shore with that great man when he fell a victim to his humanity. On the death of his commander, Lieutenant Phillips, himself wounded, swam off to the boats; but seeing one of his marines struggling in the water to escape the natives who were pursuing him, gallantly swam back, protected his man at the peril of his own life, and both reached their boat in safety. He afterwards married that accomplished and amiable daughter of Dr. Burney, whose name so frequently occurs in the Diary and Correspondence of her sister, Madame D'Arblay.

[2] Admiral Burney died in 1821, having been promoted to his rank only a few weeks before.—F.

"Have you seen," he wrote at this time, "a curious letter in the *Morning Chronicle*, by C. L.,[1] the genius of absurdity?"

He continued occasional contributions to the *New Monthly*, especially the series of "Popular Fallacies;" wrote short articles in the *Athenæum;* and a great many acrostics on the names of his friends. He had now a neighbour in Mr. Serjeant Wilde, to whom he was introduced by Mr. Burney, and whom he held in high esteem, though Lamb cared nothing for forensic eloquence, and thought very little of eloquence of any kind; which, it must be confessed, when printed is the most vapid of all reading. What political interest could not excite, personal regard produced in favour of his new friend; and Lamb supplied several versified squibs and snatches of electioneering songs to grace Wilde's contests at Newark. With these slender avocations his life was dull, and only a sense of duty induced him to persist in absence from London.

The following was addressed in 1829 to the Editor, on occasion of his giving to a child the name of "Charles Lamb," though withheld from an indisposition to intrude matters so personal to himself on the

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[1] Capel Lofft, a barrister residing in Suffolk, a well-known whig and friend of Major Wyvil and Major Cartwright, who sometimes half vexed Lamb by signing, as he had a right, their common initials to a sonnet. He wrote a very vehement letter, contending that the detention of Napoleon on board a vessel off the coast, preparatory to his being sent to St. Helena, was illegal, and that the captain of the vessel would be compelled to surrender him in obedience to a writ of Habeas Corpus.—T. As this gentleman signed with the same initials, Lamb was often to his annoyance, set down as the author of his compositions. The Hon. George Lamb, another dilettante writer, was given in a theatrical dictionary as the author of "Mr. H."—F.

reader, may now, on his drawing near the close of the subject, find its place.

"To Mr. Talfourd.

"Dear Talfourd,—You could not have told me of a more friendly thing than you have been doing. I am proud of my namesake. I shall take care never to do any dirty action, pick pockets, or anyhow get myself hanged, for fear of reflecting ignominy upon your young Chrisom. I have now a motive to be good. I shall not *omnis moriar*;—my name borne down the black gulf of oblivion.

"I shall survive in eleven letters, five more than Cæsar. Possibly I shall come to be knighted, or more! Sir C. L. Talfourd, Bart.!"

* * * * *

It was signed,—"Charles Lamb-Philo-Talfourd." He adds: "I come as near it as I can."[1]

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[1] The child who bore the name so honoured by his parents, survived his god-father only a year—dying at Brighton, whither he had been taken in the vain hope of restoration, on the 3rd December, 1835. Will the reader forgive the weakness which prompts the desire, in this place, to link their memories together, by inserting a few verses, which, having been only published at the end of the last small edition of the Editor's dramas, may have missed some of the friendly eyes for which they were written?

Our gentle Charles has pass'd away
From earth's short bondage free,
And left to us its leaden day
And mist-enshrouded sea.

Here, by the ocean's terraced side,
Sweet hours of hope were known,
When first the triumph of its tide
Seem'd omen of our own.

That eager joy the sea-breeze gave,
When first it raised his hair,

Good tidings soon reached Lamb of Miss Isola's health, and he went to Fornham to bring her, for a

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Sunk with each day's retiring wave,
Beyond the reach of prayer.

The sun-blink that through drizzling mist,
To flickering hope akin,
Lone waves with feeble fondness kiss'd,
No smile as faint can win;

Yet not in vain with radiance weak
The heavenly stranger gleams—
Not of the world it lights to speak,
But that from whence it streams.

That world our patient sufferer sought,
Serene with pitying eyes,
As if his mounting spirit caught
The wisdom of the skies.

With boundless love it look'd abroad
For one bright moment given,
Shone with a loveliness that awed,
And quiver'd into Heaven.

A year made slow by care and toil
Has paced its weary round,
Since Death enrich'd with kindred spoil
The snow-clad, frost-ribb'd ground.

Then Lamb, with whose endearing name
Our boy we proudly graced,
Shrank from the warmth of sweeter fame
Than ever bard embraced.

Still 'twas a mournful joy to think
Our darling might supply,
For years to us, a living link
With name that cannot die.

And though such fancy gleam no more
On earthly sorrow's night,
Truth's nobler torch unveils the shore
Which lends to both its light.

month's visit, to Enfield.[1] In the following year he ventured to try the experiment of lodging a little while in London; but Miss Lamb's malady compelled him to return to the solitude of Enfield.[2] He therefore gave up Colebrooke Cottage, and took what he described in a notelet to me as "an old-looking gambogish-coloured house," at Chase Side, Enfield. The situation was far from picturesque, for the opposite side of the road only presented some middling tenements, two Dissenting-chapels, and a public-house decorated with a swinging sign of a Rising Sun; but the neighbouring field-walks were pleasant, and the country, as he liked to say, quite as good as Westmoreland.[3]

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[1] It was on his return that Lamb's repartee to the query of the statistical gentleman as to the prospects of the turnip crop, which had been repeatedly published, was made.

[2] Mrs. Leishman was his landlady, though he boarded with the family that lived next door. Even in their housekeeping, brother and sister seem to have been most unfortunate. The loss of their maid "Becky," who seems to have directed the household with a good-natured tyranny, led to the boarding arrangement, which again turned out unsatisfactory; their caterers, according to Mr. Patmore, "charging them for the plainest possible accommodation a price almost sufficient to keep all the household twice over." One of the "extra teas" was subjected to an "extra" charge, because "the elderly gentleman" (Wordsworth) "had taken such a quantity of sugar in his tea."—F.

[3] Mr. T. Westwood, who was living at Enfield during these last days, recalls Lamb's kindness to him: describing their rambles in the lanes; "turning into more than one way-side hotel," where "for each host and hostess he had his joke, and was clearly an honoured presence. Later in the evening, when the lamp was lit, I ventured to slip into his hand that worst of all literary scarecrows, a volume of my juvenile verse. With his customary kindness and patience, he deciphered the weary pages, bantered me occasionally on the misanthropic and other despairing moods, and selected for commendation such as were simplest and sincerest. In the latter contingency Mary Lamb was usually called

The esteem which Lamb had always cherished for Mr. Rogers, was quickened into a livelier feeling by the generous interest which the poet took in the success of Mr. Moxon, who was starting as a publisher, and had established a magazine entitled *The Englishman*. This, although enriched with Lamb's articles, and some others of great merit, did not meet with a success so rapid as to requite the proprietor for the labour and anxiety of its production. One of his little notes to Mr. Moxon, on some long forgotten occasion of momentary displeasure, the nature and object of which is uncertain,—contains a fantastical exaggeration of anger, which, judged by those who knew the writer, only illustrates the entire absence of all the bad passions of hatred and contempt it feigns.

In 1830, a small volume of poems, the gleanings of some years, during which Lamb had devoted himself to prose, under his name of "Elia," was published by Mr. Moxon, under the title of "Album Verses," and which Lamb, in token of his strong regard, dedicated to the publisher. An unfavourable review of them in the *Literary Gazette* produced some verses from Southey, which were inserted in the *Times*, and of which the following, as evincing his unchanged friendship, may not unfitly be inserted here. The residue, being more severe on Lamb's critics than

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on for confirmation." He also mentions some little characteristic traits, such as his mode of disposing of new books, for which he cared but little. "One would come skimming to my feet through the branches of the apple-trees (our gardens were contiguous), or a "Bernard Barton" would be rolled downstairs after me from the library door. "Marcian Colonna" I remember finding on my window sill! "The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" I picked up out of the strawberry-bed.

Lamb himself would have wished, may now be spared.

> "Charles Lamb, to those who know thee justly dear
> For rarest genius, and for sterling worth,
> Unchanging friendship, warmth of heart sincere,
> And wit that never gave an ill thought birth,
> Nor ever in its sport infix'd a sting;
> To us who have admired and loved thee long,
> It is a proud as well as pleasant thing
> To hear thy good report, now borne along
> Upon the honest breath of public praise:
> We know that with the elder sons of song,
> In honouring whom thou hast delighted still,
> Thy name shall keep its course to after days."

This year closed upon the grave of Hazlitt. Lamb visited him frequently during his last illness, and attended his funeral. They had taken great delight in each other's conversation for many years; and though the indifference of Lamb to the objects of Hazlitt's passionate love or hatred, as a politician, at one time produced a coolness, the warmth of the defence of Hazlitt in "Elia's Letter to Southey" renewed the old regard of the philosopher, and set all to rights. Hazlitt, in his turn, as an Edinburgh Reviewer, had opportunities which he delighted to use, of alluding to Lamb's Specimens and Essays, and making him amends for the severity of ancient criticism, which the editor, who could well afford the genial inconsistency, was too generous to exclude. The conduct, indeed, of that distinguished person to Hazlitt, especially in his last illness, won Lamb's admiration, and wholly effaced the recollection of the time when, thirty years before, his play had been denied critical mercy under his rule. Hazlitt's death did not so much shock Lamb at the time, as it weighed down

his spirits afterwards, when he felt the want of those essays which he had used periodically to look for with eagerness in the magazines and reviews which they alone made tolerable to him; and when he realized the dismal certainty that he should never again enjoy that rich discourse of old poets and painters with which so many a long winter's night had been gladdened, or taste life with an additional relish in the keen sense of enjoyment which endeared it to his companion.

After the year 1830, Lamb's verses and essays were chiefly given to his friends; the former consisting of album contributions, the latter of little essences of observation and criticism. At this time, his old and excellent friend, Dyer, was much annoyed by some of his witticisms,—which, in truth, were only Lamb's modes of expressing his deep-seated regard; and at the quotation of a couplet in one of his early poems, which he had suppressed as liable to be misconstrued by Mr. Rogers. Mr. Barker had unfortunately met with the unexpurgated edition which contained this dubious couplet, and in his "Memorials of Dr. Parr" quoted the passage; which, to Mr. Dyer's delicate feelings,[1] conveyed the apprehension that Mr. Rogers

[1] Mr. Dyer had complained to Mr. Lamb of some suggestions in Elia, which annoyed him, not so much for his own sake as for the sake of others, who, in the delicacy of his apprehensiveness, he thought might feel aggrieved by imputations which were certainly not intended, and which they did not deserve. One passage in Elia, hinting that he had been hardly dealt with by schoolmasters, under whom he had been a teacher in his younger days, hurt him; as, in fact, he was treated by them with the most considerate generosity and kindness. Another passage which he regarded as implying that he had been underpaid by booksellers also vexed him; as his labours have always been highly esteemed, and have, according to the rate of remuneration of learned

would treat the suppression as colourable, and refer the revival of the lines to his sanction. The following letter was written to dispel those fears from his mind.

Coleridge, now in declining health, seems to have feared, from a long intermission of Lamb's visits to Highgate, that there was some estrangement between them, and to have written to Lamb under that fear. The answer shows how much he was mistaken.

"My dear Coleridge," Lamb wrote, "not an unkind thought has passed in my brain about you. But I have been wofully neglectful of you, so that I do not deserve to announce to you, that if I do not hear from you before then, I will set out on Wednesday morning to take you by the hand. I would do it this moment, but an unexpected visit might flurry you. I shall take silence for acquiescence; and come. I am glad you could write so long a letter. Old loves to, and hope of kind looks from, the Gilmans when I come.—Yours, *semper idem*, C. L."

"If you ever thought an offence, much more wrote it, against me, it must have been in the times of Noah, and the great waters swept it away. Mary's most kind love, and maybe a wrong prophet of your bodings!—here she is crying for mere love over your letter. I wring out less, but not sincerer showers."

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men, been well compensated by Mr. Valpy and others. The truth is that Lamb wrote from a vague recollection, without intending any personal reference at all to Mr. Dyer himself, and only seeking to illustrate the pure, simple, and elevated character of a man of letters "unspotted from the world." Probably no one has ever applied these suggestions to the parties for whose reputation Mr. Dyer has been so honourably anxious but himself; but it is due to his feelings to state that they are founded in error.

In the spring of 1833, Lamb made his last removal from Enfield to Edmonton. He was about to lose the society of Miss Isola, on the eve of marriage, and determined to live altogether with his sister, whether in her sanity or her madness. On the approach of the wedding-day, fixed for the 30th July, Lamb turned to the account of a half-tearful merriment, the gift of a watch to the young lady whom he was about to lose.

To Mr. Moxon.

"July 24th, 1833.

"For God's sake give Emma no more watches; *one* has turned her head. She is arrogant and insulting. She said something very unpleasant to our old clock in the passage, as if he did not keep time, and yet he had made her no appointment. She takes it out every moment to look at the moment-hand."

Miss Lamb was in the sad state of mental estrangement up to the day of the wedding; but then in the constant companionship of her brother at Edmonton.[1] A cluster of little letters to the new married pair—the first from Charles, introducing one from Mary—shows the happy effect of the news on her mental health.

To Mr. and Mrs. Moxon.

"August, 1833.

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Moxon,—Time very short. I

[1] His letters at this date are almost full of despair. To one he wrote that her state of mind was "deplorable beyond example." And to Wordsworth, in the following hopeless strain: "Mary is ill again; her illnesses encroach yearly. The last was three months, followed by two of depression most dreadful. I look back on the earlier attacks with longing; *nice little durations of six weeks or so, followed by complete restoration—shocking as they were then to me.*" Indeed from the date of their going to Edmonton the malady seems to have settled on her; to which it seems not unlikely that the solitude of the place contributed.—F.

wrote to Miss Fryer, and had the sweetest letter about you, Emma, that ever friendship dictated. 'I am full of good wishes, I am crying with good wishes,' she says; but you shall see it.

"Dear Moxon,—I take your writing most kindly, and shall most kindly your writing from Paris.

"I want to crowd another letter to Miss Fryer into the little time after dinner, before post-time. So with twenty thousand congratulations, Yours, C. L.

"I am, calm, sober, happy. Turn over for the reason. I got home from Dover Street, by Evans, *half as sober as a judge*. I am turning over a new leaf, as I hope you will now."

The turn of the leaf presented Miss Lamb's letter; and at the foot is the following by Charles:—

"Wednesday.

"Dears, again,—Your letter interrupted a seventh game at picquet which *we* were having, after walking to Wright's and purchasing shoes. We passed our time in cards, walks, and reading. We attack Tasso soon. C. L.

"Never was such a calm, or such a recovery. 'Tis her own words, undictated."

In this year the choicest essays, which Lamb had written since the publication of Elia, were collected and published—as with a melancholy foreboding—under the title of "The Last Essays of Elia;" by Mr. Moxon. The work contains ample proof that the powers of the author had ripened rather than declined; for the paper called "Blakesmoor in H—shire," which embodies his recollection of the old mansion in which his grandmother lived as housekeeper; those on Elliston. "Captain Jackson,"

and "The Old Margate Hoy," are among the most original, the least constrained, and the most richly coloured of his works. It was favourably noticed by almost all the principal critics—by many enthusiastically and sincerely praised—and an admirable notice in *The Quarterly* was published just after the foreboding of the title was fulfilled. His indisposition to write, however, increased; but in creating so much, excellent in kind, so complete in itself, and so little tinged with alloy, he had, in truth, done enough, and had earned in literature, as in the drudgery of the desk, a right to repose. Yet, still ready to obey the call of friendship, he wrote both prologue and epilogue to Knowles's play of "The Wife;" the composition of which must have been mere labour, as they are only decently suited to the occasion, and have no mark or likelihood to repay the vanity of the poet.

Miss Isola's marriage, which left Lamb and his sister once more alone, induced them to draw a little nearer to their friends; and they had fixed their abode in Church Street, within reach of the Enfield walks which custom had endeared to them.[1] There with his sister he continued, regularly visiting London and dining with Mr. Cary on every third Wednesday. Lamb and his sister were now, for the last year of their united lives, always together.

He had now to sustain the severest of his losses. After a long and painful illness—borne with an heroic patience which concealed the intensity of his sufferings from the bystanders, Coleridge died. As in the instance of Hazlitt, Lamb did not feel the immediate blow so acutely as he himself expected; but the

[1] The name of his landlady was Mrs Walden.—F.

calamity sank deep into his mind, and was, I believe, seldom far from his thoughts. It had been arranged that the attendance at the funeral should be confined to the family of the departed poet and philosopher, and Lamb, therefore, was spared the misery of going through the dismal ceremony of mourning. For the first week he forbore to write; but at its close he addressed the following short letter to one of the family of him whom he once so justly denominated Coleridge's "more than a friend."

"My dear Sir," he wrote to the Rev. Mr. Gilman, "the sad week being over, I must write to you to say, that I was glad of being spared from attending; I have no words to express my feelings with you all. I can only say that when you think a short visit from me would be acceptable, when your father and mother shall be able to see me *with comfort*, I will come to the bereaved house. Express to them my tenderest regards and hopes that they will continue our friends still. We both love and respect them as much as a human being can, and finally thank them with our hearts for what they have been to the poor departed.

"God bless you all. C. LAMB."

Shortly after, assured that his presence would be welcome, Lamb went to Highgate. There he asked leave to see the nurse who had attended upon Coleridge; and being struck and affected by the feeling she manifested towards his friend, insisted on her receiving five guineas from him,—a gratuity which seemed almost incomprehensible to the poor woman, but which Lamb could not help giving as an immediate expression of his own gratitude. From her he learned the effort by which Coleridge had suppressed the expression of his sufferings, and the discovery

affected him even more than the news of his death. He would startle his friends sometimes by suddenly exclaiming, "Coleridge is dead!" and then pass on to common themes, having obtained the momentary relief of oppressed spirits. He still continued, however, his monthly visits to Mr. Cary; and was ready to write an acrostic, or a complimentary epigram, at the suggestion of any friend.

A quiet dinner at the British Museum[1] with Mr. Cary once a month, to which Lamb looked forward with almost boyish eagerness, was now almost his only festival. Lamb's regard for him had now ripened into a fast friendship. In general, these were occasions on which Lamb observed the strictest rules of temperance; but once accident of stomach or of sentiment caused a woful deviation.[2] In a little note to his host about this time, he hints at one of his few physical tastes.—"We are thinking," he says, "of roast *shoulder* of mutton with onion sauce, but I scorn to prescribe to the hospitalities of mine host." The following, after these festivities had been interrupted by Mr. Cary's visit to the Continent, is their last memorial.

TO MR. CARY.

"Sept. 12, 1834.

"By Cot's plessing we will not be absence at the grace."

"Dear C.,—We long to see you, and hear account of your peregrinations, of the Tun at Heidelburg, the Clock of Strasburg, the statue at Rotterdam, the

[1] Lamb was admitted to the Museum so far back as May 12th, 1804, —"recommended" by Mr. Godwin.—F.

[2] "To be seen deliberately," he says in his apologetic letter, "to go out of the house of a clergyman drunk!"—F.

dainty Rhenish, and poignant Moselle wines, Westphalian hams, and Botargoes of Altona. But perhaps you have seen, not tasted any of these things.

"Yours, very glad to chain you back again to your proper centre, book and Bibliothecæ,

"C. and M. LAMB."

CHAPTER IX.

Lamb's Wednesday Nights.—His Companions.—Last Glimpses.

Two circles of rare social enjoyment—differing as widely as possible in all external circumstances—but each superior in its kind to all others, during the same period frankly opened to men of letters—now existing only in the memory of those who are fast departing from us—may, without offence, be placed side by side in grateful recollection; they are the dinners at Holland House and the suppers of "the Lambs" at the Temple, Great Russell Street, and Islington. Strange, at first, as this juxta-position may seem, a little reflection will convince the few survivors who have enjoyed both, that it involves no injustice to either; while with those who are too young to have been admitted to these rare festivities, we may exercise the privilege of age by boasting what good fellowship was once enjoyed, and what "good talk" there was once in the world!

But let us call to mind the aspects of each scene, before we attempt to tell of the conversation, which will be harder to recall and impossible to characterise. And first, let us invite the reader to assist at a dinner at Holland House in the height of the London and Parliamentary season, say a Saturday in June. It is scarcely seven—for the luxuries of the house are

enhanced by a punctuality in the main object of the day, which yields to no dilatory guest of whatever pretension—and you are seated in an oblong room, rich in old gilding, opposite a deep recess, pierced by large old windows through which the rich branches of trees bathed in golden light, just admit the faint outline of the Surrey Hills. Among the guests are some perhaps of the highest rank, always some of high political importance, about whom the interest of busy life gathers, intermixed with others eminent already in literature or art, or of that dawning promise which the hostess delights to discover and the host to smile on. All are assembled for the purpose of enjoyment; the anxieties of the minister, the feverish struggles of the partisan, the silent toils of the artist or critic, are finished for the week; professional and literary jealousies are hushed; sickness, decrepitude, and death are silently voted shadows; and the brilliant assemblage is prepared to exercise to the highest degree the extraordinary privilege of mortals to live in the knowledge of mortality without its consciousness, and to people the present hour with delights, as if a man lived and laughed and enjoyed in this world for ever. Every appliance of physical luxury which the most delicate art can supply, attends on each; every faint wish which luxury creates is anticipated; the noblest and most gracious countenance in the world smiles over the happiness it is diffusing, and redoubles it by cordial invitations and encouraging words, which set the humblest stranger guest at perfect ease. As the dinner merges into the dessert, and the sunset casts a richer glow on the branches, still, or lightly waving in the evening light, and on the scene within, the harmony of all sensations becomes more perfect; a

delighted and delighting chuckle invites attention to some jolly sally of the richest intellectual wit reflected in the faces of all, even to the favourite page in green, who attends his mistress with duty like that of the antique world; the choicest wines are enhanced in their liberal but temperate use by the vista opened in Lord Holland's tales of bacchanalian evenings at Brookes's, with Fox and Sheridan, when potations deeper and more serious rewarded the Statesman's toils and shortened his days; until at length the serener pleasure of conversation, of the now carelessly scattered groups, is enjoyed in that old, long, unrivalled library in which Addison mused, and wrote, and drank; where every living grace attends; "and more than echoes talk along the walls." One happy peculiarity of these assemblies was, the number of persons in different stations and of various celebrity, who were gratified by seeing, still more, in hearing and knowing each other; the statesman was relieved from care by associations with the poet of whom he had heard and partially read; and the poet was elevated by the courtesy which "bared the *great* heart," which "beats beneath a star;" and each felt, not rarely, the true dignity of the other, modestly expanding under the most genial auspices.

Now turn to No. 4, Inner Temple Lane, at ten o'clock, when the sedater part of the company are assembled, and the happier stragglers are dropping in from the play. Let it be any autumn or winter month, when the fire is blazing steadily, and the clean-swept hearth and whist-tables speak of the spirit of Mrs. Battle, and serious looks require "the rigour of the game." The furniture is old-fashioned and worn; the ceiling low, and not wholly unstained

by traces of "the great plant," though now virtuously forborne: but the Hogarths, in narrow black frames, abounding in infinite thought, humour, and pathos, enrich the walls; and all things wear an air of comfort and hearty English welcome. Lamb himself, yet unrelaxed by the glass, is sitting with a sort of Quaker primness at the whist-table, the gentleness of his melancholy smile half lost in his intentness on the game; his partner, the author of "Political Justice," (the majestic expression of his large head not disturbed by disproportion of his comparatively diminutive stature,) is regarding his hand with a philosophic but not a careless eye; Captain Burney, only not venerable because so young in spirit, sits between them; and H. C. R., who alone now and then breaks the proper silence, to welcome some incoming guest, is his happy partner—true winner in the game of life, whose leisure achieved early, is devoted to his friends! At another table, just beyond the circle which extends from the fire, sit another four. The broad, burly, jovial bulk of John Lamb, the Ajax Telamon of the slender clerks of the old South Sea House, whom he sometimes introduces to the rooms of his younger brother, surprised to learn from them that he is growing famous, confronts the stately but courteous Alsager; while P., "his few hairs bristling" at gentle objurgation watches his partner M. B., dealing, with "soul more white"[1] than the hands of which Lamb once said, "M., if dirt was trumps, what hands you would hold!" In one

[1] Lamb's Sonnet, dedicatory of his first volume of prose to this cherished friend, thus concludes:

"Free from self-seeking, envy, low design,
I have not found a whiter soul than thine."

corner of the room, you may see the pale earnest countenance of Charles Lloyd, who is discoursing "of fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute," with Leigh Hunt; and if you choose to listen, you will scarcely know which most to admire—the severe logic of the melancholy reasoner, or its graceful evasion by the tricksome fantasy of the joyous poet. Basil Montague, gentle enthusiast in the cause of humanity, which he has lived to see triumphant, is pouring into the outstretched ear of George Dyer some tale of legalised injustice, which the recipient is vainly endeavouring to comprehend. Soon the room begins to fill; in *slouches* Hazlitt from the theatre, where his stubborn anger for Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo has been softened by Miss Stephens's angelic notes, which might "chase anger, and grief, and fear, and sorrow, and pain from mortal or immortal minds;" Kenney, with a tremulous pleasure, announces that there is a crowded house to the ninth representation of his new comedy, of which Lamb lays down his cards to inquire; or Ayrton, mildly radiant, whispers the continual triumph of "Don Giovanni," for which Lamb, incapable of opera, is happy to take his word. Now and then an actor glances on us from "the rich Cathay" of the world behind the scenes, with news of its brighter human-kind, and with looks reflecting the public favour—Liston, grave beneath the weight of the town's regards—or Miss Kelly, unexhausted in spirit by alternating the drolleries of high farce with the terrible pathos of melodrama,—or Charles Kemble mirrors the chivalry of thought, and ennobles the party by bending on them looks beaming with the aristocracy of nature. Meanwhile Becky lays the

cloth on the side-table, under the direction of the most quiet, sensible, and kind of women—who soon compels the younger and more hungry of the guests to partake largely of the cold roast lamb or boiled beef, the heaps of smoking roasted potatoes, and the vast jug of porter, often replenished from the foaming pots, which the best tap of Fleet Street supplies. Perfect freedom prevails, save when the hospitable pressure of the mistress excuses excess; and perhaps, the physical enjoyment of the playgoer exhausted with pleasure, or of the author jaded with the labour of the brain, is not less than that of the guests at the most charming of aristocratic banquets. As the hot water and its accompaniments appear, and the severities of whist relax, the light of conversation thickens: Hazlitt, catching the influence of the spirit from which he has lately begun to abstain, utters some fine criticism with struggling emphasis; Lamb stammers out puns suggestive of wisdom, for happy Barron Field to admire and echo; the various driblets of talk combine into a stream, while Miss Lamb moves gently about to see that each modest stranger is duly served; turning, now and then, an anxious loving eye on Charles, which is softened into a half humorous expression of resignation to inevitable fate, as he mixes his second tumbler! This is on ordinary nights, when the accustomed Wednesday-men assemble; but there is a difference on great extra nights, gladdened by "the bright visitations" of Wordsworth or Coleridge; the cordiality of the welcome is the same, but a sedater wisdom prevails. Happy hours were they for the young disciple of the then desperate, now triumphant cause of Wordsworth's genius, to be admitted to the presence of the

poet who had opened a new world for him in the undiscovered riches of his own nature, and its affinities with the outer universe; whom he worshipped the more devoutly for the world's scorn; for whom he felt the future in the instant, and anticipated the "All hail hereafter!" which the great poet has lived to enjoy! To win him to speak of his own poetry—to hear him recite its noblest passages—and to join in his brave defiance of the fashion of the age—was the solemn pleasure of such a season; and, of course, superseded all minor disquisitions. So, when Coleridge came, argument, wit, humour, criticism were hushed; the pertest, smartest, and the cleverest felt that all were assembled to listen; and if a card-table had been filled, or a dispute begun before he was excited to continuous speech, his gentle voice, undulating in music, soon

> "Suspended *whist*, and took with ravishment
> The thronging audience.[1]

[1] Mr. Procter's recollections of these evenings are not less interesting. "None of Lamb's intimates," he says, "were persons of title or fashion, or of any political importance. They were reading men, or authors, or old friends who had no name or pretensions. None of them ever forsook him; they loved him, and in return he had a strong regard for them. When you went to Lamb's rooms on the Wednesday evenings (his 'At Home') you generally found the card-table spread out, Lamb himself one of the players. On the corner of the table was a snuff-box; and the game was enlivened by sundry brief ejaculations and pungent questions, which kept alive the wits of the party present. When the conversation became general, Lamb's part in it was very effective. His short clear sentences always produced effect. He never joined in talk unless he understood the subject; then, if the matter in question interested him, he was not slow in showing earnestness: but I never heard him argue or talk for argument's sake. If he was indifferent to the question, he was silent.

"The supper of cold meat, on these occasions, was always on the

The conversation which animated each of these memorable circles, approximated, in essence, much

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side table; not very formal, as may be imagined; and every one might rise, when it suited him, and cut a slice or take a glass of porter, without reflecting on the abstinence of the rest of the company. Lamb would, perhaps, call out and bid the hungry guest help himself without ceremony.

"It was curious to observe the gradations in Lamb's manner to his various guests; although it was courteous to all. With Hazlitt he talked as though they met the subject in discussion on equal terms; with Leigh Hunt he exchanged repartees; to Wordsworth he was almost respectful; with Coleridge he was sometimes jocose, sometimes deferring; with Martin Burney fraternally familiar; with Manning affectionate; with Godwin merely courteous; or if friendly, then in a minor degree. The man whom I found at Lamb's house more frequently than any other person was Martin Burney. Lamb was very much attached to Martin, who was a sincere and able man, although with a very unprepossessing physiognomy. His face was warped by paralysis, which affected one eye and one side of his mouth. He was plain and unaffected in manner, very diffident and retiring: yet pronouncing his opinions, when asked to do so, without apology or hesitation. He was a barrister; and travelled the western circuit at the same time as Sir Thomas Wilde (afterwards Lord Truro), whose briefs he used to read before the other considered them; marking out the principal facts and points for attention. Martin Burney had excellent taste in books; eschewed the showy and artificial, and looked into the sterling qualities of writing. He frequently accompanied Lamb in his visits to friends, and although very familiar with Charles, he always spoke of him, with respect, as *Mr.* Lamb. The last time I saw Burney was at the corner of a street in London, when he was overflowing on the subject of Raffaelle and Hogarth. After a great and prolonged struggle, he said, he had arrived at the conclusion that Raffaelle was the greater man of the two.

"Notwithstanding Lamb's somewhat humble description of his friends and familiars, some of them were men well known in literature. Amongst others, I met there Messrs. Coleridge, Manning, Hazlitt, Haydon, Wordsworth, Barron Field, Leigh Hunt, Clarkson, Sheridan Knowles, Talfourd, Kenny, Godwin, the Burneys, Payne Collier, and others whose names I need not chronicle. I met there, also, on one or

more nearly than might be surmised from the difference in station of the principal talkers, and the contrast in physical appliances; that of the bowered saloon of Holland House having more of earnestness and depth, and that of the Temple-attic more of airy grace than would be predicated by a superficial observer. The former possessed the peculiar interest of directly bordering on the scene of political conflict—gathering together the most eloquent leaders of the Whig party, whose repose from energetic action spoke of the week's conflict, and in whom the moment's enjoyment derived a peculiar charm from the perilous glories of the struggle which the morrow was to renew—when power was just within reach, or held with a convulsive grasp—like the eager and solemn pleasure of the soldiers' banquet in the pause of victory. The pervading spirit of Lamb's parties was also that of social progress; but it was the spirit of

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two occasions, Liston, and Miss Kelly, and, I believe, Rickman. Politics were rarely discussed amongst them. Anecdotes, characteristic, showing the strong and weak points of human nature, were frequent enough. But politics (especially party politics) were seldom admitted. Lamb disliked them as a theme for evening talk; he perhaps did not understand the subject scientifically. And when Hazlitt's impetuosity drove him, as it sometimes did, into fierce expressions on public affairs, these were usually received in silence; and the matter thus raised up for assent or controversy was allowed to drop. The beauty of these evenings was that every one was placed upon an easy level. No one out-topped the others. No one—not even Coleridge—was permitted to out-talk the rest. No one was allowed to hector the other, or to bring his own grievances too prominently forward; so as to disturb the harmony of the night. I never in all my life, heard so much unpretending good sense talked, as at Charles Lamb's social parties. Often a piece of sparkling humour was shot out that illuminated the whole evening. Sometimes there was a flight of high and earnest talk, that took one half way towards the stars."—F.

the dreamers and thinkers, not of the combatants of the world—men who, it may be, drew their theories from a deeper range of meditation, and embraced the future with more comprehensive hope—but about whom the immediate interest of party did not gather; whose victories were all within; whose rewards were visions of blessings for their species in the furthest horizon of benevolent prophecy. If a profounder thought was sometimes dragged to light in the dim circle of Lamb's companions than was native to the brighter sphere, it was still a rare felicity to watch there the union of elegance with purpose in some leader of party—the delicate, almost fragile grace of illustration in some one, perhaps destined to lead advancing multitudes or to withstand their rashness; —to observe the growth of strength in the midst of beauty expanding from the sense of the heroic past, as the famed Basil tree of Boccaccio grew from the immolated relic beneath it. If the alternations in the former oscillated between wider extremes, touching on the wildest farce and most earnest tragedy of life; the rich space of brilliant comedy which lived ever between them in the latter, was diversified by serious interests and heroic allusions. Sydney Smith's wit —not so wild, so grotesque, so deep-searching as Lamb's—had even more quickness of intellectual demonstration; wedded moral and political wisdom to happiest language, with a more rapid perception of secret affinities; was capable of producing epigrammatic splendour reflected more permanently in the mind, than the fantastic brilliancy of those rich conceits which Lamb stammered out with his painful smile. Mackintosh might vie with Coleridge in vast and various knowledge; but there the competition

between these great talkers ends, and the contrast begins; the contrast between facility and inspiration; between the ready access to each ticketed and labelled compartment of history, science, art, criticism, and the genius that fused and renovated all. But then a younger spirit appeared at Lord Holland's table to redress the balance—not so poetical as Coleridge, but more lucid—in whose vast and joyous memory all the mighty past lived and glowed anew; whose declamations presented, not groups tinged with distant light, like those of Coleridge, but a series of historical figures in relief, exhibited in bright succession, as if by dioramic art there glided before us embossed surfaces of heroic life.[1] Rogers too was there—con-

[1] I take leave to copy the glowing picture of the evenings of Holland House and of its admirable master, drawn by this favourite guest himself, from an article which adorned the *Edinburgh Review*, just after Lord Holland's death.

"The time is coming when, perhaps a few old men, the last survivors of our generation, will in vain seek, amidst new streets, and squares, and railway stations, for the site of that dwelling which was in their youth the favourite resort of wits and beauties—of painters and poets—of scholars, philosophers, and statesmen. They will then remember, with strange tenderness, many objects once familiar to them—the avenue and the terrace, the busts and the paintings; the carving, the grotesque gilding, and the enigmatical mottoes. With peculiar fondness, they will recall that venerable chamber, in which all the antique gravity of a college library was so singularly blended with all that female grace and wit could devise to embellish a drawing-room. They will recollect, not unmoved, those shelves loaded with the varied learning of many lands and many ages; those portraits in which were preserved the features of the best and wisest Englishmen of two generations. They will recollect how many men who have guided the politics of Europe—who have moved great assemblies by reason and eloquence—who have put life into bronze and canvas, or who have left to posterity things so written as it shall not willingly let them die—were there mixed with all that was loveliest and gayest in the society

necting the literature of the last age with this, partaking of some of the best characteristics of both —whose first poem sparkled in the closing darkness of the last century "like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear," and who was advancing from a youth which had anticipated memory, to an age of kindness and hope; and Moore, who paused in the fluttering expression

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of the most splendid of capitals. They will remember the singular character which belonged to that circle, in which every talent and accomplishment, every art and science, had its place. They will remember how the last debate was discussed in one corner, and the last comedy of Scribe in another; while Wilkie gazed with modest admiration on Reynolds' Baretti; while Mackintosh turned over Thomas Aquinas to verify a quotation; while Talleyrand related his conversations with Barras at the Luxemburg, or his ride with Lannes over the field of Austerlitz. They will remember, above all, the grace—and the kindness, far more admirable than grace—with which the princely hospitality of that ancient mansion was dispensed. They will remember the venerable and benignant countenance, and the cordial voice of him who bade them welcome. They will remember that temper which years of pain, of sickness, of lameness, of confinement, seemed only to make sweeter and sweeter; and that frank politeness, which at once relieved all the embarrassment of the youngest and most timid writer or artist, who found himself for the first time among Ambassadors and Earls. They will remember that constant flow of conversation, so natural, so animated, so various, so rich with observation and anecdote; that wit which never gave a wound; that exquisite mimicry which ennobled, instead of degrading; that goodness of heart which appeared in every look and accent, and gave additional value to every talent and acquirement. They will remember, too, that he whose name they hold in reverence was not less distinguished by the inflexible uprightness of his political conduct, than by his loving disposition and his winning manners. They will remember that, in the last lines which he traced, he expressed his joy that he had done nothing unworthy of the friend of Fox and Grey; and they will have reason to feel similar joy, if, in looking back on many troubled years, they cannot accuse themselves of having done anything unworthy of men who were distinguished by the friendship of Lord Holland."

of graceful trifles, to whisper some deep-toned thought of Ireland's wrongs and sorrows.

Literature and art supplied the favourite topics to each of these assemblies,—both discussed with earnest admiration, but surveyed in different aspects. The conversation at Lord Holland's was wont to mirror the happiest aspects of the living mind; to celebrate the latest discoveries in science; to echo the quarterly decisions of imperial criticism; to reflect the modest glow of young reputations;—all was gay, graceful, decisive, as if the pen of Jeffrey could have spoken; or, if it reverted to old times, it rejoiced in those classical associations which are always young. At Lamb's, on the other hand, the topics were chiefly sought among the obscure and remote; the odd, the quaint, the fantastic were drawn out from their dusty recesses; nothing could be more foreign to its embrace than the modern circulating library, even when it teemed with the Scotch novels. Whatever the subject was, however, in the more aristocratic, or the humbler sphere, it was always discussed by those best entitled to talk on it; no others had a chance of being heard. This remarkable freedom from *bores* was produced in Lamb's circle by the authoritative texture of its commanding minds; in Lord Holland's, by the more direct, and more genial influence of the hostess, which checked that tenacity of subject and opinion which sometimes broke the charm of Lamb's parties by "a duel in the form of a debate." Perhaps beyond any other hostess,—certainly far beyond any host, Lady Holland possessed the task of perceiving, and the power of evoking the various capacities which lurked in every part of the brilliant circles over which she presided, and restrained each to its appropriate

sphere, and portion of the evening. To enkindle the enthusiasm of an artist on the theme over which he had achieved the most facile mastery; to set loose the heart of the rustic poet, and imbue his speech with the freedom of his native hills; to draw from the adventurous traveller a breathing picture of his most imminent danger; or to embolden the bashful soldier to disclose his own share in the perils and glories of some famous battle-field; to encourage the generous praise of friendship when the speaker and the subject reflected interest on each other; or win from an awkward man of science the secret history of a discovery which had astonished the world; to conduct these brilliant developments to the height of satisfaction, and then to shift the scene by the magic of a word, were among her nightly successes. And if this extraordinary power over the elements of social enjoyment was sometimes wielded without the entire concealment of its despotism; if a decisive check sometimes rebuked a speaker who might intercept the variegated beauty of Jeffrey's indulgent criticism, or the jest announced and self-rewarded in Sydney Smith's cordial and triumphant laugh, the authority was too clearly exerted for the evening's prosperity, and too manifestly impelled by an urgent consciousness of the value of these golden hours which were fleeting within its confines, to sadden the enforced silence with more than a momentary regret. If ever her prohibition—clear, abrupt, and decisive,—indicated more than a preferable regard for livelier discourse, it was when a depreciatory tone was adopted towards genius, or goodness, or honest endeavour, or when some friend, personal or intellectual, was mentioned in slighting phrase. Habituated to a generous partisanship, by

strong sympathy with a great political cause, she carried the fidelity of her devotion to that cause into her social relations, and was ever the truest and the fastest of friends. The tendency, often more idle than malicious, to soften down the intellectual claims of the absent, which so insidiously besets literary conversation, and teaches a superficial insincerity, even to substantial esteem and regard, and which was sometimes insinuated into the conversation of Lamb's friends, though never into his own, found no favour in her presence; and hence the conversations over which she presided, perhaps beyond all that ever flashed with a kindred splendour, were marked by that integrity of good nature which might admit of their exact repetition to every living individual whose merits were discussed, without the danger of inflicting pain. Under her auspices, not only all critical, but all personal talk was tinged with kindness; the strong interest which she took in the happiness of her friends, shed a peculiar sunniness over the aspects of life presented by the common topics of alliances, and marriages, and promotions; and there was not a hopeful engagement, or a happy wedding, or a promotion of a friend's son, or a new intellectual triumph of any youth with whose name and history she was familiar, but became an event on which she expected and required congratulation as on a part of her own fortune. Although there was necessarily a preponderance in her society of the sentiment of popular progress, which once was cherished almost exclusively by the party to whom Lord Holland was united by sacred ties, no expression of triumph in success, no virulence in sudden disappointment, was ever permitted to wound the most sensitive ears of her conservative guests. It might be

that some placid comparison of recent with former times, spoke a sense of freedom's peaceful victory; or that, on the giddy edge of some great party struggle, the festivities of the evening might take a more serious cast, as the news arrived from the scene of contest, and the pleasure might be deepened by the peril; but the feeling was always restrained by the supremacy given to those permanent solaces for the mind, in the beautiful and the great, which no political changes disturb. Although the death of the noble master of the venerated mansion closed its portals for ever on the exquisite enjoyments to which they had been so generously expanded, the art of conversation lived a little longer in the smaller circle which Lady Holland still drew almost daily around her; honouring his memory by following his example, and struggling against the perpetual sense of unutterable bereavement, by rendering to literature that honour and those reliefs, which English aristocracy has too often denied it: and seeking consolation in making others proud and happy. That lingering happiness is extinct now; Lamb's kindred circle—kindred, though so different—dispersed almost before he died; the "thoughts that wandered through eternity," are no longer expressed in time; the fancies and conceits, "gay creatures of the element" of social delight, "that in the colours of the rainbow lived, and played in the plighted clouds," flicker only in the backward perspective of waning years; and for the survivors, I may venture to affirm, no such conversation as they have shared in either circle will ever be theirs again in this world![1]

[1] This elaborate comparison between the Holland House coterie and Lamb's supper parties, is admitted to be rather far-fetched.—F.

CHAPTER IX.

Lamb's Friends and Companions.

Before closing these Memorials of Charles and Mary Lamb, it may be permitted me to glance separately at some of the friends who are grouped around them in memory, and who, like them, live only in recollection, and in the works they have left behind them.

George Dyer was one of the first objects of Lamb's youthful reverence, for he had attained the stately rank of Grecian in the venerable school of Christ's Hospital, when Charles entered it, a little, timid, affectionate, child; but this boyish respect, once amounting to awe, gave place to a familiar habit of loving banter, which, springing from the depths of old regard, approximated to schoolboy roguery, and, now and then, though very rarely, gleamed on the consciousness of the ripe scholar. No contrast could be more vivid than that presented by the relations of each to the literature they both loved; one divining its inmost essences, plucking out the heart of its mysteries, shedding light on its dimmest recesses; the other devoted, with equal assiduity, to its externals. Books, to Dyer, "were a real world, both pure and good;" among them he passed, unconscious of time, from youth to extreme age, vegetating on their

dates and forms, and "trivial fond records," in the learned air of great libraries, or the dusty confusion of his own, with the least possible apprehension of any human interest vital in their pages, or of any spirit of wit or fancy glancing across them. His life was an Academic pastoral. Methinks I see his gaunt, awkward form, set off by trousers too short, like those outgrown by a gawky lad, and a rusty coat as much too large for the wearer, hanging about him like those garments which the aristocratic Milesian peasantry prefer to the most comfortable rustic dress; his long head silvered over with short yet straggling hair, and his dark grey eyes glistening with faith and wonder, as Lamb satisfies the curiosity which has gently disturbed his studies as to the authorship of the Waverley Novels, by telling him, in the strictest confidence, that they are the works of Lord Castlereagh, just returned from the Congress of Sovereigns at Vienna! Off he runs, with animated stride and shambling enthusiasm, nor stops till he reaches Maida Hill, and breathes his news into the startled ear of Leigh Hunt, who, "as a public writer," ought to be possessed of the great fact with which George is laden! Or shall I endeavour to revive the bewildered look with which, just after he had been announced as one of Lord Stanhope's executors and residuary legatees, he received Lamb's grave inquiry, "Whether it was true, as commonly reported, that he was to be made a Lord?" "O dear no! Mr. Lamb," responded he with earnest seriousness, but not without a moment's quivering vanity, "I could not think of such a thing; it is not true, I assure you." "I thought not," said Lamb, "and I contradict it wherever I go; but the Government will not

ask your consent; they may raise you to the peerage without your even knowing it." "I hope not, Mr. Lamb; indeed, indeed, I hope not; it would not suit me at all," responded Dyer, and went his way, musing on the possibility of a strange honour descending on his reluctant brow. Or shall I recall the visible presentment of his bland unconsciousness of evil when his sportive friend taxed it to the utmost, by suddenly asking what he thought of the murderer Williams, who, after destroying two families in Ratcliffe Highway, had broken prison by suicide, and whose body had just before been conveyed, in shocking procession, to its cross-road grave! The desperate attempt to compel the gentle optimist to speak ill of a mortal creature produced no happier success than the answer, "Why I should think, Mr. Lamb, he must have been rather an eccentric character." This simplicity of a nature not only unspotted by the world, but almost abstracted from it, will seem the more remarkable, when it is known that it was subjected, at the entrance of life, to a hard battle with fortune. Dyer was the son of very poor parents, residing in an eastern suburb of London, Stepney or Bethnal-greenward, where he attracted the attention of two elderly ladies as a serious child, with an extraordinary love for books. They obtained for him a presentation to Christ's Hospital, which he entered at seven years of age; fought his way through its sturdy ranks to its head; and, at nineteen, quitted it for Cambridge, with only an exhibition and his scholarly accomplishments to help him. On he went, however, placid, if not rejoicing, through the difficulties of a life illustrated only by scholarship; encountering tremendous labours; unresting yet serene; until at eighty-five he breathed

out the most blameless of lives, which began in a struggle to end in a learned dream![1]

Mr. Godwin, who during the happiest period of Lamb's weekly parties, was a constant assistant at his whist-table, resembled Dyer in simplicity of manner and devotion to letters; but the simplicity was more superficial, and the devotion more profound than the kindred qualities in the guileless scholar; and, instead of forming the entire being, only marked the surface of a nature beneath which extraordinary power lay hidden. As the absence of worldly wisdom subjected Dyer to the sportive sallies of Lamb, so a like deficiency in Godwin exposed him to the coarser mirth of Mr. Horne Tooke, who was sometimes inclined to seek relaxation for the iron muscles of his imper-

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[1] Mr. Crabb Robinson gives a pleasant sketch of George Dyer:—"One of the best creatures morally that ever breathed. He was son of a watchman at Wapping, and put to a charity school by some pious Dissenting people. He was a scholar, but to the end of his days (and he lived to be eighty-five) was a bookseller's drudge. He led a life of literary labour in poverty—made indexes, corrected the press, and gave lessons in Latin and Greek." Wordsworth considered his Life of R. Robinson to be one of the best works of biography in the language. Reid's epigram is well known:

"The world all say, my gentle Dyer,
Thy odes so very much want fire;
Repair the fault, my gentle Dyer,
And throw thy odes into the fire."

It is said that he would "literally give away his last guinea." Lord Stanhope made him one of his six executors and residuary legatees, with Charles Fox. Dyer was the first to declare that he rejected the legacy and renounced the executorship; but the heir insisted on his accepting a small annuity. Finally, in his old age he married his laundress, with the encouragement and advice of his friends, and died in March, 1841. Mrs. Dyer died at the age of ninety-nine having survived four husbands.—F.

turbable mind in trying to make a philosopher look foolish. To a stranger's gaze the author of the "Political Justice" and "Caleb Williams," as he appeared in the Temple, always an object of curiosity except to his familiars, presented none of those characteristics with which fancy had invested the daring speculator and relentless novelist; nor, when he broke silence, did his language tend to reconcile the reality with the expectation. The disproportion of a frame which, low of stature, was surmounted by a massive head which might befit a presentable giant, was rendered almost imperceptible, not by any vivacity of expression (for his countenance was rarely lighted up by the deep-seated genius within), but by a gracious suavity of manner which many "a fine old English gentleman" might envy. His voice was small; the topics of his ordinary conversation trivial, and discussed with a delicacy and precision which might almost be mistaken for finical; and the presence of the most interesting persons in literary society, of which he had enjoyed the best, would not prevent him from falling after dinner into the most profound sleep. This gentle, drowsy, spiritless demeanour, presents a striking contrast to a reputation which once filled Europe with its echoes; but it was, in truth, when rightly understood, perfectly consistent with those intellectual elements which in some raised the most enthusiastic admiration, and from others elicited the wildest denunciations of visionary terror.

In Mr. Godwin's mind, the faculty of abstract reason so predominated over all others, as practically to extinguish them; and his taste, akin to this faculty, sought only for its development through the medium of composition for the press. He had no imagination,

no fancy, no wit, no humour; or if he possessed any of those faculties, they were obscured by that of pure reason; and being wholly devoid of the quick sensibility which irritates speech into eloquence, and of the passion for immediate excitement and applause, which tends to its presentment before admiring assemblies, he desired no other audience than that which he could silently address, and learned to regard all things through a contemplative medium. In this sense, far more than in the extravagant application of his wildest theories, he levelled all around him; admitted no greatness but that of literature; and neither desired nor revered any triumphs but those of thought. If such a reasoning faculty, guided by such a disposition, had been applied to abstract sciences, no effect remarkable beyond that of rare excellence would have been produced; but the apparent anomalies of Mr. Godwin's intellectual history arose from the application of his power to the passions, the interests, and the hopes of mankind, at a time when they enkindled into frightful action, and when he calmly worked out his problems among their burning elements with the "ice-brook's temper," and the severest logic. And if some extreme conclusions were inconsistent with the faith and the duty which alone can sustain and regulate our nature, there was no small compensation in the severity of the process to which the student was impelled, for the slender peril which might remain lest the results should be practically adopted. A system founded on pure reason, which rejected the impulses of natural affection, the delights of gratitude, the influences of prejudice, the bondage of custom, the animation of personal hope; which appealed to no passion—which suggested no

luxury—which excited no animosities—and which offered no prize for the observance of its laws, except a participation in the expanding glories of progressive humanity, was little calculated to allure from the accustomed paths of ancient ordinance any man disposed to walk in them by the lights from heaven. On the other hand, it was a healthful diversion from those seductions in which the heart secretly enervates and infects the understanding, to invite the revolutionary speculator to the contemplation of the distant and the refined; by the pursuit of impracticable error to brace the mind for the achievement of everlasting truth; and on the "heat and flame of the distemper" of an impassioned democracy to "sprinkle cool patience." The idol Political Justice, of which he was the slow and laborious architect, if it for a while enchanted, did not long enthral or ever debase its worshippers; "its bones were marrowless, its blood was cold,"—but there was surely "speculation in its eyes" which "glared withal" into the future. Such high casuistry as it evoked has always an ennobling tendency, even when it dallies with error; the direction of thought in youth is of less consequence than the mode of its exercise; and it is only when the base interests and sensual passions of mortality pander to the understanding that truth may fear for the issue.

The author of this cold and passionless intellectual phantasy looked out upon the world he hoped to inform from recesses of contemplation which the outward incidents of life did not disturb, and which, when closed, left him a common man, appearing to superficial observers rather below than above the level of ordinary talkers. To his inward gaze the stupendous changes which agitated Europe, at the time he wrote,

were silent as a picture. The pleasure of his life was to think of; its business was to write; all else in it was vanity. Regarding his own being through the same spiritualising medium, he saw no reason why the springs of its existence should wear out, and, in the spring-time of his speculation, held that man might become immortal on earth by the effort of the will. His style partook of the quality of his intellect and the character of its purposes—it was pure, simple, colourless. His most imaginative passages are inspired only by a logic quickened into enthusiasm by the anticipation of the approaching discovery of truth —the dawning *Eureka* of the reasoner; they are usually composed of "line upon line and precept upon precept," without an involution of style, or an eddy in the thought. He sometimes complained, though with the benignity that always marked his estimate of his opponents, that Mr. Malthus's style was too richly ornamented for argument; and certainly, with all its vivacity of illustration it lacks the transparent simplicity of his own. The most palpable result which he ever produced by his writings was the dark theory in the first edition of the work on Population, which was presented as an answer to his reasoning on behalf of the perfectibility of man; and he used to smile at his ultimate triumph, when the writer, who had only intended a striking paradox, tamed it down to the wisdom of economy, and adapted it to Poor-law uses; neutralised his giant spectres of Vice and Misery by the practical intervention of Moral Restraint; and left the optimist, Godwin, still in unclouded possession of the hope of universal peace and happiness, postponed only to that time when passion shall be subjected to reason, and population, no more rising like a resistless

tide, between adamantine barriers to submerge the renovated earth, shall obey the commands of wisdom; rise and fall as the means of subsistence expand or contract; and only contribute an impulse to the universal harmony.

The persons of Mr. Godwin's romances—stranger still—are the naked creations of the same intellectual power, marvellously endowed with galvanic life. Though with happier symmetry, they are as much made out of chains and links of reasoning, as the monster was fashioned by the chemistry of the student, in the celebrated novel of his gifted daughter. Falkland, and Caleb Williams, are the mere impersonations of the unbounded love of reputation, and irresistible curiosity; these ideas are developed in each with masterly iteration—to the two ideas all causes give way; and materials are subjected, often of remarkable coarseness, to the refinement of the conception. Hazlitt used to observe of these two characters, that the manner they are played into each other, was equal to anything of the kind in the drama; and there is no doubt that the opposition, though at the cost of probability, is most powerfully maintained: but the effect is partly owing to the absence of all extrinsic interest which could interfere with the main purpose; the beatings of the heart become audible, not only from their own intensity, but from the desolation which the author has expanded around them. The consistency in each is that of an idea, not of a character; and if the effect of form and colour is produced, it is, as in line engraving, by the infinite minuteness and delicacy of the single strokes. In like manner, the incidents by which the author seeks to exemplify the wrongs inflicted by power on goodness in civilised society, are

utterly fantastical; nothing can be more minute, nothing more unreal; the youth being involved by a web of circumstances woven to immesh him, which the condition of society that the author intends to repudiate, renders impossible; and which, if true, would prove not that the framework of law is tyrannous, but that the will of a single oppressor may elude it. The subject of "St. Leon" is more congenial to the author's power; but it is, in like manner, a logical development of the consequences of a being prolonged on earth through ages; and, as the dismal vista expands, the skeleton speculators crowd in to mock and sadden us!

Mr. Godwin was thus a man of two beings, which held little discourse with each other—the daring inventor of theories constructed of air-drawn diagrams —and the simple gentleman, who suffered nothing to disturb or excite him, beyond his study. He loved to walk in the crowded streets of London, not like Lamb, enjoying the infinite varieties of many-coloured life around him, but because he felt, amidst the noise, and crowd, and glare, more intensely the imperturbable stillness of his own contemplations. His means of comfortable support were mainly supplied by a shop in Skinner Street, where, under the auspices of "M. J. Godwin and Co.," the prettiest and wisest books for children issued, which old-fashioned parents presented to their children, without suspecting that the graceful lessons of piety and goodness which charmed away the selfishness of infancy, were published, and sometimes revised, and now and then written, by a philosopher whom they would scarcely venture to name! He met the exigencies which the vicissitudes of business sometimes caused, with the trusting simplicity

which marked his course—he asked his friends for aid without scruple, considering that their means were justly the due of one who toiled in thought for their inward life, and had little time to provide for his own outward existence; and took their excuses, when offered, without doubt or offence. The very next day after I had been honoured and delighted by an introduction to him at Lamb's chambers, I was made still more proud and happy by his appearance at my own on such an errand—which my poverty, not my will, rendered abortive. After some pleasant chat on indifferent matters, he carelessly observed, that he had a little bill for £150 falling due on the morrow, which he had forgotten till that morning, and desired the loan of the necessary amount for a few weeks. At first, in eager hope of being able thus to oblige one whom I regarded with admiration akin to awe, I began to consider whether it was possible for me to raise such a sum; but, alas! a moment's reflection sufficed to convince me that the hope was vain, and I was obliged, with much confusion, to assure my distinguished visitor how glad I should have been to serve him, but that I was only just starting as a special pleader, was obliged to write for magazines to help me on, and had not such a sum in the world. "Oh dear," said the philosopher, "I thought you were a young gentleman of fortune—don't mention it—don't mention it; I shall do very well elsewhere:"—and then, in the most gracious manner, reverted to our former topics; and sat in my small room for half an hour, as if to convince me that my want of fortune made no difference in his esteem. A slender tribute to the literature he had loved and served so well, was accorded to him in the old age to which he attained,

by the gift of a sinecure in the Exchequer, of about £200 a-year, connected with the custody of the Records; and the last time I saw him, he was heaving an immense key to unlock the musty treasures of which he was guardian—how unlike those he had unlocked, with finer talisman, for the astonishment and alarm of one generation, and the delight of all others!

John Thelwall, who had once exulted in the appellation of Citizen Thelwall, having been associated with Coleridge and Southey in their days of enthusiastical dreaming, though a more precise and practical reformer than either, was introduced by them to Lamb, and was welcomed to his circle, in the true catholicism of its spirit, although its master cared nothing for the Roman virtue which Thelwall devotedly cherished, and which Horne Tooke kept in uncertain vibration between a rebellion and a hoax. Lamb justly esteemed Thelwall as a thoroughly honest man;—not honest merely in reference to the moral relations of life, but to the processes of thought; one whose mind, acute, vigorous, and direct, perceived only the object immediately before it, and, undisturbed by collateral circumstances, reflected, with literal fidelity, the impression it received, and maintained it as sturdily against the beauty that might soften it, or the wisdom that might mould it, as against the tyranny that would stifle its expression. "If to be honest as the world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand," to be honest as the mind works is to be one man of a million; and such a man was Thelwall. Starting with imperfect education from the thraldom of domestic oppression, with slender knowledge, but with fiery zeal, into the dangers of political enterprise, and treading fear-

lessly on the verge of sedition, he saw nothing before him but powers which he assumed to be despotism and vice, and rushed headlong to crush them. The point of time—just that when the accumulated force of public opinion had obtained a virtual mastery over the accumulated corruptions of ages, but when power, still unconvinced of its danger, presented its boldest front to opposing intellect, or strove to crush it in the cruelty of awaking fear—gave scope for the ardent temperament of an orator almost as poor in scholastic cultivation as in external fortune; but strong in integrity, and rich in burning words.

Thus passionate, Thelwall spoke boldly and vehemently—at a time when indignation was thought to be a virtue; but there is no reason to believe he ever meditated any treason except that accumulated in the architectural sophistry of Lord Eldon, by which he proved a person who desired to awe the Government into a change of policy to be guilty of compassing the king's death—as thus :—that the king must resist the proposed alteration in his measures—that resisting he must be deposed—and that being deposed, he must necessarily die ;—though his boldness of speech placed him in jeopardy even after the acquittals of his simple-minded associate Hardy, and his enigmatical instructor Tooke, who forsook him, and left him, when acquitted, to the mercy of the world. His life, which before this event had been one of self-denial and purity remarkable in a young man who had imbibed the impulses of revolutionary France, partook of considerable vicissitude. At one time, he was raised by his skill in correcting impediments of speech, and teaching elocution as a science, into elegant competence—at other times saddened by the

difficulties of poorly requited literary toil and wholly unrequited patriotism; but he preserved his integrity and his cheerfulness—"a man of hope and forward-looking mind even to the last." Unlike Godwin, whose profound thoughts slowly struggled into form, and seldom found utterance in conversation,—speech was, in him, all in all, his, delight, his profession, his triumph, with little else than passion to inspire or colour it. The flaming orations of his "Tribune," rendered more piquant by the transparent masquerade of ancient history, which, in his youth, "touched monied worldlings with dismay," and infected the poor with dangerous anger, seemed vapid, spiritless, and shallow when addressed through the press to the leisure of the thoughtful. The light which glowed with so formidable a lustre before the evening audience, vanished on closer examination, and proved to be only a harmless phantom-vapour which left no traces of destructive energy behind it.

Thelwall, in person small, compact, muscular—with a head denoting indomitable resolution, and features deeply furrowed by the ardent workings of the mind,—was as energetic in all his pursuits and enjoyments as in political action. He was earnestly devoted to the Drama, and enjoyed its greatest representations with the freshness of a boy who sees a play for the first time. He hailed the kindred energy of Kean with enthusiastic praise; but abjuring the narrowness of his political vision in matters of taste, did justice to the nobler qualities of Mrs. Siddons and her brothers. In literature and art also, he relaxed the bigotry of his liberal intolerance, and expatiated in their wider fields with a taste more catholic. Here Lamb was ready with his sympathy, which in-

deed even the political zeal, that he did not share, was too hearted to repel. Although generally detesting lectures on literature as superficial and vapid substitutes for quiet reading, and recitations as unreal mockeries of the true Drama, he sometimes attended the entertainments, composed of both, which Thelwall, in the palmy days of his prosperity, gave at his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, not on politics, which he had then forsaken for elocutionary science, though maintaining the principles of his youth, but partly on elocution, and partly on poetry and acting, into which he infused the fiery enthusiasm of his nature. Sometimes, indeed, his fervour animated his disquisitions on the philosophy of speech with greater warmth than he reserved for more attractive themes; the melted vowels were blended into a rainbow, or dispersed like fleecy clouds; and the theory of language was made interesting by the honesty and vigour of the speaker. Like all men who have been chiefly self-taught, he sometimes presented common-places as original discoveries, with an air which strangers mistook for quackery; but they were unjust; to the speaker these were the product of his own meditation, though familiar to many, and not rarely possessed the charm of originality in their freshness. Lamb at least, felt that it was good, among other companions of richer and more comprehensive intelligence, to have one friend who was undisturbed by misgiving either for himself or his cause; who enunciated wild paradox and worn-out common-place with equal confidence; and who was ready to sacrifice ease, fortune, fame—everything but speech, and, if it had been possible, even *that*—to the cause of truth or friendship.

William Hazlitt was, for many years, one of the

brightest and most constant ornaments of Lamb's parties;—linked to him in the firm bond of intellectual friendship—which remained unshaken in spite of some superficial differences, "short and far between," arising from Lamb's insensibility to Hazlitt's political animosities, and his adherence to Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, who shared them. Hazlitt in his boyhood had derived from his father that attachment to abstract truth for its own sake, and that inflexible determination to cherish it, which naturally predominated in the being of the minister of a small rural congregation, who cherished religious opinions adverse to those of the great body of his countrymen, and waged a spiritual warfare throughout his peaceful course. Thus disciplined, he was introduced to the friendship of youthful poets, in whom the dawn of the French Revolution had enkindled hope, and passion, and opinions tinctured with hope and passion, which he eagerly embraced; and when changes passed over the prospects of mankind, which induced them, in maturer years, to modify the doctrines they had taught, he resented these defections almost as personal wrongs, and, when his pen found scope, and his tongue utterance, wrote and spoke of them with such bitterness as can only spring from the depths of old affection. No writer, however, except Wilson, did such noble justice to the poetry of Wordsworth, when most despised, and to the genius of Coleridge, when most obscured; he cherished a true admiration for each in "the last recesses of the mind," and defended them with dogged resolution against the scorns and slights of the world. Still the superficial difference was, or seemed, too wide to admit of personal intercourse; and I do not think

that during the many years which elapsed between my introduction to Lamb, and Hazlitt's death, he ever met either of the poets at the rooms of the man they united in loving.

Although Mr. Hazlitt was thus staunch in his attachment to principles which he reverenced as true, he was by no means rigid in his mode of maintaining and illustrating them; but, on the contrary, frequently diminished the immediate effect of his reasonings by the prodigality and richness of the allusions with which he embossed them. He had as unquenchable a desire for truth as others have for wealth, or power, or fame; he pursued it with sturdy singleness of purpose; and enunciated it without favour or fear. But, besides that love of truth, that sincerity in pursuing it, and that boldness in telling it, he had also a fervent aspiration after the beautiful; a vivid sense of pleasure, and an intense consciousness of his own individual being, which sometimes produced obstacles to the current of speculation, by which it was broken into dazzling eddies or urged into devious windings. Acute, fervid, vigorous, as his mind was, it wanted the one great central power of Imagination, which brings all the other faculties into harmonious action; multiplies them into each other; makes truth visible in the forms of beauty, and substitutes intellectual vision for proof. Thus, in him, truth and beauty held divided empire. In him, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was *strong;* and, when these contend, it is not difficult to anticipate the result; "for the power of beauty shall sooner transform honesty from what it is into a bawd, than the person of honesty shall transform beauty into its likeness." This "sometime paradox" was vividly exemplified in Haz-

litt's personal history, his conversation, and his writings. To the solitudes of the country in which he mused on fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," a temperament of unusual ardour had given an intense interest, akin to that with which Rousseau has animated and oppressed the details of his early years.

He had not then, nor did he find till long afterwards, power to embody his meditations and feelings in words. The consciousness of thoughts which he could not hope adequately to express, increased his natural reserve, and he turned for relief to the art of painting, in which he might silently realise his dreams of beauty, and repay the loveliness of nature by fixing some of its fleeting aspects in immortal tints. A few old prints from the old masters awakened the spirit of emulation within him; the sense of beauty became identified in his mind with that of glory and duration; while the peaceful labour he enjoyed calmed the tumult in his veins, and gave steadiness to his pure and distant aim. He pursued the art with an earnestness and patience which he vividly describes in his essay, "On the pleasure of Painting;" and to which he frequently reverted in the happiest moods of his conversation; and, although in this, his chosen pursuit, he failed, the passionate desire for success, and the long struggle to attain it, left deep traces in his mind, heightening his keen perception of external things, and mingling with all his speculations airy shapes and hues which he had vainly striven to transfer to canvas. A painter may acquire a fine insight into the nice distinctions of character,—he may copy manners in words as he does in colours,—but it may be apprehended that his course as a severe reasoner will be somewhat "troubled with thick-

coming fancies." And if the successful pursuit of art may thus disturb the process of abstract contemplation, how much more may an unsatisfied ambition ruffle it; bid the dark threads of thought glitter with radiant fancies unrealized, and clothe the diagrams of speculation with the fragments of picture which the mind cherishes the more fondly, because the hand refused to realize? What wonder, if, in the mind of an ardent youth, thus struggling in vain to give palpable existence to the shapes of loveliness which haunted him, "the homely beauty of the good old cause" should assume the fascinations not properly its own?

This association of beauty with reason diminished the immediate effect of Mr. Hazlitt's political essays, while it enhanced their permanent value. It was the fashion, in his lifetime, to denounce him as a sour Jacobin; but no description could be more unjust. Under the influence of some bitter feeling, or some wayward fancy, he occasionally poured out a furious invective against those whom he regarded as the enemies of liberty, or as apostates from her cause; but, in general, the force of his expostulation, or his reasoning, was diverted (unconsciously to himself) by figures and phantasies, by fine and quaint allusions, by quotations from his favourite authors, introduced with singular felicity, as respects the direct link of association, but tending, by their very beauty, to unnerve the mind of the reader, and substitute the sense of luxury for clear conviction, or noble anger. In some of his essays, where the reasoning is most cogent, every other sentence contains some exquisite passage from Shakespeare, or Fletcher, or Wordsworth, trailing after it a line of golden associations;

or some reference to a novel, over which we have a thousand times forgotten the wrongs of mankind; till, in the recurring shocks of pleasurable surprise, the main argument is forgotten. When, for example, he compares the position of certain political waverers to that of Clarissa Harlowe confronting the ravisher who would repeat his outrage, with the penknife pointed to her breast, and her eyes uplifted to Heaven, and describes them as having been, like her, trepanned into a house of ill-fame, near Pall Mall, and there defending their soiled virtue wlth their penknives; what reader, at the suggestion of the stupendous scene which the allusion directly revives, can think or care about the renegade of yesterday? Here, again, is felt the want of that Imagination, which brings all things into one, tinges all our thoughts and sympathies with one hue, and rejects every ornament which does not heighten or prolong the feeling which it seeks to embody.

Even when he retaliates on Southey for attacking his old co-patriots, the poetical associations which bitter remembrance suggests, almost neutralise the vituperation; he brings every "flower which sad embroidery wears to strew the laureate hearse," where ancient regards are interred; and merges all the censure of the changed politician in praise of the simple dignity and the generous labours of a singularly noble and unsullied life. So little does he regard the unity of sentiment in his compositions, that in his "Letter to Gifford," after a series of just and bitter retorts on his maligner as "the fine link which connects literature with the police," he takes a fancy to teach that "ultra-crepidarian critic" his own theory of the natural disinterestedness of the human mind, and de-

velops it, not in the dry, hard, mathematical style in which it was first enunciated, but "o'er informed" with the glow of sentiment, and terminating in an eloquent rhapsody. This latter portion of the letter is one of the noblest of his effusions, but it entirely destroys the first in the mind of the reader; for who, when thus contemplating the living wheels on which human benevolence is borne onwards in its triumphant career, and the spirit with which they are instinct, can think of the literary wasp which had settled for a moment upon them, and who had just before been mercilessly transfixed with minikin arrows?

But the most signal example of the influences which "the show of things" exercised over Mr. Hazlitt's mind was the setting up the Emperor Napoleon as his idol. He strove to justify this predilection to himself by referring it to the revolutionary origin of his hero, and the contempt with which he trampled upon the claims of legitimacy, and humbled the pride of kings. But if his "only love" thus sprung "from his only hate," it was not cherished in its blossom by antipathies. If there had been nothing in his mind which tended to aggrandisement and glory, and which would fain reconcile the principles of freedom with the lavish accumulation of power, he might have desired the triumph of young tyranny over legitimate thrones; but he would scarcely have watched its progress and its fall "like a lover and a child." His feeling for Bonaparte in exile was not a sentiment of respect for fallen greatness; not a desire to trace "the soul of goodness in things evil;" not a loathing of the treatment the Emperor received from "his cousin kings" in the day of adversity; but entire affection mingling with the current of the blood, and pervading the moral

and intellectual being. Nothing less than this strong attachment, at once personal and refined, would have enabled him to encounter the toil of collecting and arranging facts and dates for four volumes of narrative which constitute his "Life of Napoleon;"—a drudgery too abhorrent to his habits of mind as a thinker, to be sustained by any stimulus which the prospect of remuneration or the hope of applause could supply. It is not so much in the ingenious excuses which he discovers for the worst acts of his hero—offered even for the midnight execution of the Duke d'Enghien and the invasion of Spain—that the stamp of personal devotion is obvious, as in the graphic force with which he has delineated the short-lived splendours of the Imperial Court, and "the trivial fond records" he has gathered of every vestige of human feeling by which he could reconcile the Imperial Cynic to the species he scorned. The first two volumes of his work, although redeemed by scattered thoughts of true originality and depth, are often confused and spiritless; the characters of the principal revolutionists are drawn too much in the style of awkward, sprawling caricatures; but when the hero casts all his rivals into the distance, erects himself the individual enemy of England, consecrates his power by religious ceremonies, and defines it by the circle of a crown, the author's strength becomes concentrated; his narrative assumes an epic dignity and fervour; dallies with the flowers of usurped prerogative, and glows with "the long-resounding march and energy divine." How happy and proud is he to picture the meeting of the Emperor with the Pope, and the grandeurs of the coronation! How he grows wanton in celebrating the fêtes of the Tuileries, as "presenting all the ele-

gance of enchanted pageants," and laments them as "gone like a fairy revel!" How he "lives along the line" of Austerlitz, and rejoices in its thunder, and hails its setting sun, and exults in the minutest details of the subsequent meeting of the conquered sovereigns at the feet of the conqueror! How he expatiates on the fatal marriage with "the deadly Austrian" (as Mr. Cobbett justly called Maria Louisa), as though it were a chapter in romance, and sheds the grace of beauty on the imperial picture! How he kindles with martial ardour as he describes the preparations against Russia; musters the myriads of barbarians with a show of dramatic justice; and fondly lingers among the brief triumphs of Moskwa on the verge of the terrible catastrophe! The narrative of the disastrous expedition is, indeed, written with a master's hand; we see the "grand army" marching to its destruction through the immense perspective: the wild hordes flying before the terror of its "coming;" the barbaric magnificence of Moscow towering in the remote distance; and when we gaze upon the sacrificial conflagration of the Kremlin, we feel that it is worthy to become the funeral pile of the conqueror's glories. It is well for the readers of this splendid work, that there is more in it of the painter than of the metaphysician; that its style glows with the fervour of battle, or stiffens with the spoils of victory; yet we wonder that this monument to imperial grandeur should be raised from the dead level of jacobinism by an honest and profound thinker. The solution is, that although he was this, he was also more—that, in opinion, he was devoted to the cause of the people; but that, in feeling, he required some individual object of worship; that he selected Napoleon as one in whose

origin and career he might at once impersonate his principles and gratify his affections; and that he adhered to his own idea with heroic obstinacy, when the "child and champion of the Republic" openly sought to repress all feeling and thought, but such as he could cast in his own iron moulds, and scoffed at popular enthusiasm even while it bore him to the accomplishment of his loftiest desires.

Mr. Hazlitt had little inclination to talk or write about contemporary authors, and still less to read them. He was with difficulty persuaded to look into the Scotch novels, but when he did so, he found them old in substance though new in form, read them with as much avidity as the rest of the world, and expressed better than any one else what all the world felt about them. His hearty love of them, however, did not diminish, but aggravate his dislike of the political opinions so zealously and consistently maintained, of their great author: and yet the strength of his hatred towards that which was accidental and transitory only set off the unabated power of his regard for the great and the lasting. Coleridge and Wordsworth were not moderns to him, for they were the inspirers of his youth, which was his own antiquity, and the feelings which were the germ of their poetry had sunk deep into his heart. With the exception of the works of these, and of his friends Barry Cornwall and Sheridan Knowles, in whose successes he rejoiced, he held modern literature in slight esteem, and regarded the discoveries of science and the visions of optimism with an undazzled eye. His "large discourse of reason" looked not before, but after. He felt it a sacred duty, as a lover of genius and art, to defend the fame of the mighty dead. When the old painters were assailed

in "The Catalogue Raisonné of the British Institution," he was "touched with noble anger." All his own vain longings after the immortality of the works which were libelled,—all the tranquillity and beauty they had shed into his soul,—all his comprehension of the sympathy and delight of thousands, which, accumulating through long time, had attested their worth—were fused together to dazzle and subdue the daring critic who would disturb the judgment of ages. So, when a popular poet assailed the fame of Rousseau, seeking to reverse the decision of posterity on what that great though unhappy writer had achieved by suggesting the opinion of people of condition in his neighbourhood on the figure he made to their apprehensions while in the service of Madame de Warrens, he vindicated the prerogatives of genius with the true logic of passion. Few things irritated him more than the claims set up for the present generation to be wiser and better than those which have gone before it. He had no power of imagination to embrace the golden clouds which hung over the Future, but he rested and expatiated in the Past. To his apprehension human good did not appear a slender shoot of yesterday, like the beanstalk in the fairy tale, aspiring to the skies, and leading to an enchanted castle, but a huge growth of intertwisted fibres, grassing the earth by numberless roots of custom, habit, and affection, and bearing vestiges, of "a thousand storms, a thousand thunders."

When I first met Hazlitt, in the year 1815, he was staggering under the blow of Waterloo. The re-appearance of his imperial idol on the coast of France, and his triumphant march to Paris, like a fairy vision, had excited his admiration and sympathy to the

utmost pitch; and though in many respects sturdily English in feeling, he could scarcely forgive the valour of the conquerors; and bitterly resented the captivity of the Emperor in St. Helena, which followed it, as if he had sustained a personal wrong. On this subject only, he was "eaten up with passion;" on all others he was the fairest, the most candid of reasoners. His countenance was then handsome, but marked by a painful expression; his black hair, which had curled stiffly over his temples, had scarcely received its first tints of grey; his gait was awkward; his dress was neglected; and, in the company of strangers, his bashfulness was almost painful—but when, in the society of Lamb and one or two others, he talked on his favourite themes of old English books, or old Italian pictures, no one's conversation could be more delightful. The poets, from intercourse with whom he had drawn so much of his taste, and who had contributed to shed the noble infection of beauty through his reasoning faculties, had scarcely the opportunity of appreciating their progress. It was, in after years, by the fireside of "the Lambs," that his tongue was gradually loosened, and his passionate thoughts found appropriate words. There, his struggles to express the fine conceptions with which his mind was filled were encouraged by entire sympathy; there he began to stammer out his just and original conceptions of Chaucer and Spenser, and other English poets and prose writers, more talked of, though not better known, by their countrymen; there he was thoroughly understood and dexterously cheered by Miss Lamb, whose nice discernment of his first efforts in conversation were dwelt upon by him with affectionate gratitude, even when most out of humour with the

world. When he mastered his diffidence, he did not talk for effect, to dazzle, or surprise, or annoy, but with the most simple and honest desire to make his view of the subject in hand entirely apprehended by his hearer. There was sometimes an obvious struggle to do this to his own satisfaction; he seemed labouring to drag his thought to light from its deep lurking-place; and, with timid distrust of that power of expression which he had found so late in life, he often betrayed a fear lest he had failed to make himself understood, and recurred to the subject again and again, that he might be assured he had succeeded. With a certain doggedness of manner, he showed nothing pragmatical or exclusive; he never drove a principle to its utmost possible consequences but, like Locksley, "allowed for the wind." For some years previous to his death he observed an entire abstinence from fermented liquors, which he had once quaffed with the proper relish he had for all the good things of this life, but which he courageously resigned when he found the indulgence perilous to his health and faculties. The cheerfulness with which he made this sacrifice was one of the most amiable traits in his character. He had no censure for others, who, in the same dangers, were less wise or less resolute; nor did he think he had earned, by his own constancy, any right to intrude advice which he knew, if wanted, must be unavailing. Nor did he profess to be a convert to the general system of abstinence, which was advanced by one of his kindest and staunchest friends; he avowed that he yielded to necessity; and instead of avoiding the sight of that which he could no longer taste, he was seldom so happy as when he sat with friends at their wine, participating the sociality of the

time, and renewing his own past enjoyment in that of his companions, without regret and without envy. Like Dr. Johnson, he made himself poor amends for the loss of wine by drinking tea, not so largely, indeed, as the hero of Boswell, but at least of equal potency; for he might have challenged Mrs. Thrale and all her sex to make stronger tea than his own. In society, as in politics, he was no flincher. He loved "to hear the chimes at midnight," without considering them as a summons to rise. At these seasons, when in his happiest mood, he used to dwell on the conversational power of his friends, and live over again the delightful hours he had passed with them; repeat the pregnant puns that one had made; tell over again a story with which another had convulsed the room; or expatiate on the eloquence of a third; always best pleased when he could detect some talent which was unregarded by the world, and giving alike, to the celebrated and the unknown, due honour.

Mr. Hazlitt delivered three courses of lectures at the Surrey Institution, on "The English Poets;" on "The English Comic Writers," and on "The Age of Elizabeth," which Lamb (under protest against lectures in general) regularly attended, an earnest admirer, amidst crowds with whom the lecturer had "an imperfect sympathy." They consisted chiefly of Dissenters, who agreed with him in his hatred of Lord Castlereagh, and his love of religious freedom, but who "loved no plays;" of Quakers, who approved him as the earnest opponent of slavery and capital punishment, but who "heard no music;" of citizens, devoted to the main chance, who had a hankering after "the improvement of the mind;" but to whom his favourite doctrine of its natural disinterestedness

was a riddle; of a few enemies who came to sneer; and a few friends, who were eager to learn and to admire. The comparative insensibility of the bulk of his audience to his finest passages sometimes provoked him to awaken their attention by points which broke the train of his discourse; after which, he could make himself amends by some abrupt paradox which might set their prejudices on edge, and make them fancy they were shocked. He startled many of them at the onset, by observing, that, since Jacob's dream, "the heavens have gone farther off, and become astronomical;" a fine extravagance, which the ladies and gentlemen who had grown astronomical themselves under the preceding lecturer, felt called on to resent as an attack on their severer studies. When he read a well-known extract from Cowper, comparing a poor cottager with Voltaire, and had pronounced the line; "A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew," they broke into a joyous shout of self-gratulation, that they were so much wiser than the scornful Frenchman. When he passed by Mrs. Hannah More with observing that "she had written a great deal which he had never read," a voice gave expression to the general commiseration and surprise, by calling out "More pity for you!" They were confounded at his reading with more emphasis, perhaps, than discretion, Gay's epigrammatic lines on Sir Richard Blackstone, in which scriptural persons are too freely hitched into rhyme; but he went doggedly on to the end, and, by his perseverance, baffled those who, if he had acknowledged himself wrong, by stopping, would have visited him with an outburst of displeasure which he felt to be gathering. He once had a more edifying advantage over them. He was

enumerating the humanities which endeared Dr. Johnson to his mind, and at the close of an agreeable catalogue, mentioned, as last and noblest, "his carrying the poor victim of disease and dissipation on his back, through Fleet Street," at which a titter arose from some, who were struck by the picture, as ludicrous, and a murmur from others, who deemed the allusion unfit for ears polite: he paused for an instant, and then added, in his sturdiest and most impressive manner,—"an act which realizes the parable of the Good Samaritan;" at which his moral and his delicate hearers shrunk, rebuked into deep silence. He was not eloquent, in the true sense of the term; for his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse. He wrote all his lectures, and read them as they were written; but his deep voice and earnest manner suited his matter well. He seemed to dig into his subject, and not in vain. In delivering his longer quotations, he had scarcely continuity enough for the versification of Shakespeare and Milton, "with linked sweetness long drawn out;" but he gave Pope's brilliant satire and delightful compliments, which are usually complete within the couplet, with an elegance and point which the poet himself, could he have heard, would have felt as indicating their highest praise.

Mr. Hazlitt, having suffered for many years from derangement of the digestive organs, for which perhaps a moderate use of fermented liquors would have been preferable to abstinence, solaced only by the intense tincture of tea in which he found refuge, worn out at last, died on 18th Sept., 1830, at the age of fifty-two. Lamb frequently visited him during his

sufferings, which were not, as has been erroneously suggested, aggravated by the want of needful comforts; for although his careless habits had left no provision for sickness, his friends gladly acknowledged, by their united aid, the deep intellectual obligations due to the great thinker. In a moment of acute pain, when the needless apprehension for the future rushed upon him, he dictated a brief and peremptory letter to the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, requiring a considerable remittance, to which he had no claim but that of former remunerated services, which the friend, who obeyed his bidding, feared might excite displeasure; but he mistook Francis Jeffrey; the sum demanded was received by return of post, with the most anxious wishes for Hazlitt's recovery—just too late for him to understand his error. Lamb joined a few friends in attending his funeral in the churchyard of St. Anne's, Soho, where he was interred, and felt his loss—not so violently at the time, as mournfully in the frequent recurrence of the sense that a chief source of intellectual pleasure was stopped. His personal frailties are nothing to us now; his thoughts survive; in them we have his better part entire, and in them must be traced his true history. The real events of his life are not to be traced in its external changes; as his engagement by the *Morning Chronicle*, or his transfer of his services to the *Times*, or his introduction to the *Edinburgh Review;* but in the progress and development of his fine understanding as nurtured and checked and swayed by his affections. His warfare was within; its spoils are ours!

One of the soundest and most elegant scholars whom the school of Christ's Hospital ever produced, Mr. Thomas Barnes, was a frequent guest at Lamb's

chambers in the Temple; and though the responsibilities he undertook, before Lamb quitted that, his happiest abode, prevented him from visiting often at Great Russell Street, at Islington, or Enfield, he was always ready to assist by the kind word of the powerful journal in which he became most potent, the expanding reputation of his schoolmate and friend. After establishing a high social and intellectual character at Cambridge, he had entered the legal profession as a special pleader, but was prevented from applying the needful devotion to that laborious pursuit by violent rheumatic affections, which he solaced by writing critiques and essays of rare merit. So shattered did he appear in health, that when his friends learned that he had accepted the editorship of the *Times* newspaper, they almost shuddered at the attempt as suicidal, and anticipated a speedy ruin to his constitution from the pressure of constant labour and anxiety, on the least healthful hours of toil. But he had judged better than they of his own physical and intellectual resources, and the mode in which the grave responsibility and constant exertion of his office would affect both; for the regular effort consolidated his feverish strength, gave evenness and tranquillity to a life of serious exertion, and supplied, for many years, power equal to the perpetual demand; affording a striking example how, when finely attuned, the mind can influence the body to its uses. The facile adaptation of his intellect to his new duties was scarcely less remarkable than the mastery it achieved over his desultory habits and physical infirmities; for, until then, it had seemed more refined than vigorous — more elegant than weighty — too fastidious to endure the supervision and arrangement of innumerable reports, paragraphs,

and essays; but, while a scholarly grace was shed by him through all he wrote or moulded, the needful vigour was never wanting to the high office of superintending the great daily miracle; to the discipline of its various contributors; or to the composition of articles which he was always ready, on the instant of emergency, to supply.

Mr. Barnes, linked by school associations with Leigh Hunt, filled the theatrical department of criticism in the *Examiner* during the period when the Editor's imprisonment for alleged libel on the Prince Regent precluded his attendance on the theatres. It was no easy office of friendship to supply the place of Hunt in the department of criticism, he may be almost said to have invented; but Mr. Barnes, though in a different style, well sustained the attractions of the "Theatrical Examiner." Fortunately the appearance of Mr. Kean during this interval enabled him to gratify the profound enthusiasm of his nature, without doing violence to the fastidious taste to which it was usually subjected. He perceived at once the vivid energy of the new actor; understood his faults to be better than the excellences of ordinary aspirants; and hailed him with the most generous praise—the more valuable as it proceeded from one rarely induced to render applause, and never yielding it except on the conviction of true excellence. Hazlitt, who contributed theatrical criticism, at the same time, to the *Morning Chronicle*, and who astounded the tame mediocrity of Mr. Perry's subordinates by his earnest eulogy, and Barnes, had the satisfaction of first appreciating this unfriended performer, and, while many were offended by the daring novelty of his style, and more stood aloof with fashionable indifference from a deserted

theatre, of awakening that spirit which retrieved the fortunes of Old Drury—which revived, for a brilliant interval, the interest of the English stage, and which bore the actor on a tide of intoxicating success that "knew no retiring ebb" till it was unhappily checked by his own lamentable frailties.[1]

The manners of Mr. Barnes, though extremely courteous, were so reserved as to seem cold to strangers; but they were changed, as by magic, by

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[1] As the essays of Mr. Barnes have never been collected, I take leave to present to the reader the conclusion of his article in the *Examiner* of February 27th, 1814, on the first appearance of Mr. Kean in Richard:—

"In the heroic parts, he animated every spectator with his own feelings; when he exclaimed 'that a thousand hearts were swelling in his bosom,' the house shouted to express their accordance to a truth so nobly exemplified by the energy of his voice, by the grandeur of his mien. His death-scene was the grandest conception, and executed in the most impressive manner; it was a piece of noble poetry, expressed by action instead of language. He fights desperately: he is disarmed and exhausted of all bodily strength: he disdains to fall, and his strong volition keeps him standing: he fixes that head, full of intellectual and heroic power, directly on the enemy: he bears up his chest with an expression which seems swelling with more than human spirit: he holds his uplifted arm, in calm but dreadful defiance of his conqueror. But he is but man, and he falls after this sublime effort senseless to the ground. We have felt our eyes gush on reading a passage of exquisite poetry. We have been ready to leap at sight of a noble picture, but we never felt stronger emotion, more overpowering sensations, than were kindled by the novel sublimity of this catastrophe. In matters of mere taste, there will be a difference of opinion; but here there was no room to doubt, no reason could be imprudent enough to hesitate. Every heart beat an echo responsive to this call of elevated nature, and yearned with fondness towards the man who, while he excited admiration for himself made also his admirers glow with a warmth of conscious superiority, because they were able to appreciate such an exalted degree of excellence."

the contemplation of moral or intellectual beauty, awakened in a small circle. I well remember him, late one evening, in the year 1816, when only two or three friends remained with Lamb and his sister, long after "we had heard the chimes at midnight," holding inveterate but delighted controversy with Lamb, respecting the tragic power of Dante as compared with that of Shakespeare. Dante was scarcely known to Lamb; for he was unable to read the original, and Cary's noble translation was not then known to him; and Barnes aspired to the glory of affording him a glimpse of a kindred greatness in the mighty Italian with that which he had conceived incapable of human rivalry. The face of the advocate of Dante, heavy when in repose, grew bright with earnest admiration as he quoted images, sentiments, dialogues, against Lamb, who had taken his own immortal stand on Lear, and urged the supremacy of the child-changed father against all the possible Ugolinos of the world. Some reference having been made by Lamb to his own exposition of Lear, which had been recently published in a magazine, edited by Leigh Hunt, under the title of *The Reflector*, touched another and a tenderer string of feeling, turned a little the course of his enthusiasm the more to inflame it, and brought out a burst of affectionate admiration for his friend, then scarcely known to the world, which was the more striking for its contrast with his usually sedate demeanour. I think I see him now, leaning forward upon the little table on which the candles were just expiring in their sockets, his fists clenched, his eyes flashing, and his face bathed in perspiration, exclaiming to Lamb, "And do I not know, my boy, that you have written about Shakespeare, and Shakespeare's own Lear, finer than

any one ever did in the world, and won't I let the world know it?" He was right; there is no criticism in the world more worthy of the genius it estimates than that little passage referred to on Lear; few felt it then like Barnes; thousands have read it since, here, and tens of thousands in America; and have felt as he did; and will answer for the truth of that excited hour.

Mr. Barnes combined singular acuteness of understanding with remarkable simplicity of character. If he was skilful in finding out those who duped others, he made some amends to the world of sharpers by being abundantly duped himself. He might caution the public to be on their guard against impostors of every kind, but his heart was open to every species of delusion which came in the shape of misery. Poles —real and theatrical—refugees, pretenders of all kinds, found their way to the *Times* inner office, and though the inexorable editor excluded their lucubrations from the precious space of its columns, he rarely omitted to make them amends by large contributions from his purse. The intimate acquaintance with all the varieties of life forced on him by his position in the midst of a moving epitome of the world, which vividly reflected them all, failed to teach him distrust or discretion. He was a child in the centre of the most feverish agitations; a dupe in the midst of the quickest apprehensions; and while, with unbending pride, he repelled the slightest interference with his high functions from the greatest quarters, he was open to every tale from the lowest which could win from him personal aid. Rarely as he was seen in his later years in Lamb's circle, he is indestructibly associated with it in the recollection of the few survivors of its elder days; and they will lament with me that the influ-

ences for good which he shed largely on all the departments of busy life, should have necessarily left behind them such slender memorials of one of the kindest, the wisest, and the best of men who have ever enjoyed signal opportunities of moulding public opinion, and who have turned them to the noblest and the purest uses.

Among Lamb's early acquaintances and constant admirers was an artist whose chequered career and melancholy death gave an interest to the recollections with which he is linked independent of that which belongs to his pictures—Benjamin Robert Haydon. The ruling misfortune of his life was somewhat akin to that disproportion in Hazlitt's mind to which I have adverted, but productive in his case of more disastrous results—the possession of two different faculties not harmonized into one, and struggling for mastery—in that disarrangement of the faculties in which the unproductive talent becomes not a mere negative, but neutralises the other, and even turns its good into evil. Haydon, the son of a respectable tradesman at Plymouth, was endowed with two capacities, either of which exclusively cultivated with the energy of his disposition, might have led to fortune —the genius of a painter, and the passionate logic of a controversialist; talents scarcely capable of being blended in harmonious action except under the auspices of prosperity such as should satisfy the artist by fame, and appease the literary combatant by triumph.

The combination of a turbulent vivacity of mind with a fine aptitude for the most serene of arts was rendered more infelicitous by the circumstances of the young painter's early career. He was destined painfully to work his way at once through the lower

elements of his art and the difficulties of adverse fortune; and though by indomitable courage and unwearied industry he became master of anatomic science, of colouring, and of perspective, and achieved a position in which his efforts might be fairly presented to the notice of the world, his impetuous temperament was yet further ruffled by the arduous and complicated struggle. With boundless intellectual ambition, he sought to excel in the loftiest department of his art; and undertook the double responsibility of painting great pictures and of creating the taste which should appreciate, and enforcing the patronage which should reward them.

The patronage of high art, not then adopted by the Government, and far beyond the means of individuals of the middle class, necessarily appertained to a few members of the aristocracy, who alone could encourage and remunerate the painters of history. Although the beginning of Mr. Haydon's career was not uncheered by aristocratic favour, the contrast between the greatness of his own conceptions and the humility of the course which prudence suggested as necessary to obtain for himself the means of developing them on canvas, fevered his nature, which, ardent in gratitude for the appreciation and assistance of the wealthy to a degree which might even be mistaken for servility was also impatient of the general indifference to the cause of which he sought to be, not only the ornament, but unhappily for him, also the champion. Alas! he there "perceived a divided duty." Had he been contented silently to paint—to endure obscurity and privation for a while, gradually to mature his powers of execution and soften the rigour of his style and of his virtue, he might have achieved works, not

only as vast in outline and as beautiful in portions as those which he exhibited, but so harmonious in their excellences as to charm away opposition, and ensure speedy reputation, moderate fortune, and lasting fame. But he resolved to battle for that which he believed to be "the right," he rushed into a life-long contest with the Royal Academy; frequently suspended the gentle labours of the pencil for the vehement use of the pen; and thus gave to his course an air of defiance which prevented the calm appreciation of his nobler works, and increased the mischief by reaction. Indignant of the scorns "that patient merit of the unworthy takes," he sometimes fancied scorns which *impatient* merit in return imputes to the worthy; and thus instead of enjoying the most tranquil of lives (which a painter's should be), led one of the most animated, restless, and broken. The necessary consequence of this disproportion was a series of pecuniary embarrassments, the direct result of his struggle with fortune; a succession of feverish triumphs and disappointments, the fruits of his contest with power; and worse perhaps than either, the frequent diversion of his own genius from its natural course, and the hurried and imperfect development of its most majestic conceptions. To paint as finely as he sometimes did in the ruffled pauses of his passionate controversy, and amidst the terrors of impending want, was to display large innate resources of skill and high energy of mind; but how much more unquestionable fame might he have attained if his disposition had permitted him to be content with charming the world of art, instead of attempting also to instruct or reform it!

Mr. Haydon's course, though thus troubled, was

one of constant animation, and illustrated by hours of triumph, the more radiant because they were snatched from adverse fortune and a reluctant people. The exhibition of a single picture by an artist at war with the Academy which exhibited a thousand pictures at the same price—creating a sensation not only among artists and patrons of art, but among the most secluded literary circles—and engaging the highest powers of criticism—was, itself, a splendid occurrence in life;—and, twice at least, in the instance of the Entry into Jerusalem, and the Lazarus, was crowned with signal success. It was a proud moment for the daring painter, when, at the opening of the first of these Exhibitions, while the crowd of visitors, distinguished in rank or talent, stood doubting whether in the countenance of the chief figure the daring attempt to present an aspect differing from that which had enkindled the devotion of ages—to mingle the human with the Divine, resolution with sweetness, dignified composure with the anticipation of mighty suffering—had not failed, Mrs. Siddons walked slowly up to the centre of the room, surveyed it in silence for a minute or two, and then ejaculated, in her deep, low, thrilling voice, "It is perfect!" quelled all opposition, and removed the doubt, from his own mind at least, for ever.

Although the great body of artists to whose corporate power Mr. Haydon was so passionately opposed, naturally stood aside from his path, it was cheered by the attention and often by the applause of the chief literary spirits of the age, who were attracted by a fierce intellectual struggle. Sir Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Godwin, Shelley, Hunt, Coleridge, Lamb, Keats,—and many young writers for periodical works, in the freshness of unhacknied authorship—

took an interest in a course so gallant though so troublous, which excited their sympathy yet did not force them to the irksome duty of unqualified praise. Almost in the outset of his career, Wordsworth addressed to him a sonnet, in heroic strain, associating the artist's calling with his own; making common cause with him, "while the whole world seems adverse to desert;" admonishing him "still to be strenuous for the bright reward, and in the soul admit of no decay;" and, long after, when the poet had, by a wiser perseverance, gradually created the taste which appreciated his works, he celebrated, in another sonnet, the fine autumnal conception in the picture of Napoleon on the rock of St. Helena, with his back to the spectator, contemplating the blank sea, left desolate by the sunken sun. The Conqueror of Napoleon also recognised the artist's claims, and supplied him with another great subject in the contemplation of the solitude of Waterloo by its hero, ten years after the victory.

Mr. Haydon's vividness of mind burst out in his conversation, which, though somewhat broken and rugged, like his career, had also, like that, a vein of beauty streaking it. Having associated with most of the remarkable persons of his time, and seen strange varieties of "many-coloured life"—gifted with a rapid perception of character and a painter's eye for effect,—he was able to hit off, with startling facility, sketches in words which lived before the hearer. His anxieties and sorrows did not destroy the buoyancy of his spirits or rob the convivial moment of its prosperity; so that he struggled, and toiled, and laughed, and triumphed, and failed, and hoped on, till the waning of life approached and found him still in opposition to

the world, and far from the threshold of fortune. The object of his literary exertions was partially attained; the national attention had been directed to high art; but he did not personally share in the benefits he had greatly contributed to win. Even his cartoon of the Curse in Paradise failed to obtain a prize when he entered the arena with unfledged youths for competitors; and the desertion of the exhibition of his two pictures of Aristides and Nero, at the Egyptian Hall, by the public, for the neighbouring exposure of the clever manikin, General Tom Thumb, quite vanquished him. It was indeed a melancholy contrast; —the unending succession of bright crowds thronging the levees of the small abortion, and the dim and dusty room in which the two latest historical pictures of the veteran hung for hours without a visitor. Opposition, abuse, even neglect he could have borne, but the sense of ridicule involved in such a juxta-position drove him to despair. No one who knew him ever apprehended from his disasters such a catastrophe as that which closed them. He had always cherished a belief in the religion of our Church, and avowed it among scoffing unbelievers; and that belief he asserted even in the wild fragments he penned in his last terrible hour. His friends thought that even the sense of the injustice of the world would have contributed with his undimmed consciousness of his own powers to enable him to endure. In his domestic relations also he was happy, blessed in the affection of a wife of great beauty and equal discretion, who, by gentler temper and serener wisdom than his own, had assisted and soothed him in all his anxieties and griefs, and whose image was so identified in his mind with the beautiful as to impress

its character on all the forms of female loveliness he had created. Those who knew him best feel the strongest assurance, that notwithstanding the appearances of preparation which attended his extraordinary suicide, his mind was shattered to pieces—all distorted and broken—with only one feeling left entire, the perversion of which led to the deed, a hope to awaken sympathy in death for those whom living he could not shelter. The last hurried lines he wrote, entitled "Haydon's last Thoughts," consisted of a fevered comparison between the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon, in which he seemed to wish to repair some supposed injustice which in speech or writing he had done to the Conqueror. It was inclosed in a letter addressed to three friends, written in the hour of his death, and containing sad fragmental memorials of those passionate hopes, fierce struggles, and bitter disappointments which brought him through distraction to the grave!

A visit of Coleridge was always regarded by Lamb, as an opportunity to afford a rare gratification to a few friends, who, he knew, would prize it; and I well remember the flush of prideful pleasure which came over his face as he would hurry, on his way to the India House, into the office in which I was a pupil, and stammer out the welcome invitation for the evening. This was true self-sacrifice; for Lamb would have infinitely preferred having his inspired friend to himself and his sister, for a brief renewal of the old Salutation delights; but, I believe, he never permitted himself to enjoy this exclusive treat. The pleasure he conferred was great; for of all celebrated persons I ever saw, Coleridge alone surpassed the expectation created by his writings; for he not only was, but

appeared to be, greater than the noblest things he had written.

Lamb used to speak, sometimes with a moistened eye and quivering lip, of Coleridge when young, and wish that we could have seen him in the spring-time of his genius, at a supper in the little sanded parlour of the old Salutation hostel. The promise of those days was never realized, by the execution of any of the mighty works he planned; but the very failure gave a sort of mournful interest to the "large discourse, looking before and after," to which we were enchanted listeners; to the wisdom which lives only in our memories, and must perish with them.

From Coleridge's early works, some notion may be gleaned of what he *was;* when the steep ascent of fame rose directly before him, while he might loiter to dally with the expectation of its summit, without ignobly shrinking from its labours. His endowments at that time—the close of the last century—when literature had faded into a fashion of poor language, must have seemed, to a mind and heart like Lamb's, no less than miraculous.

A rich store of classical knowledge—a sense of the beautiful, almost verging on the effeminate—a facile power of melody, varying from the solemn stops of the organ to a bird-like flutter of airy sound—the glorious faculty of poetic hope, exerted on human prospects, and presenting its results with the vividness of prophecy; a power of imaginative reasoning which peopled the nearer ground of contemplation with thoughts

> "All plumed like ostriches, like eagles bathed,
> As full of spirit as the month of May,
> And gorgeous as the sun at Midsummer,"

endowed the author of "The Ancient Mariner," and "Christabel." Thus gifted, he glided from youth into manhood, as a fairy voyager on a summer sea, to eddy round and round in dazzling circles, and to make little progress, at last, towards any of those thousand mountain summits which, glorified by aërial tints, rose before him at the extreme verge of the vast horizon of his genius. "The Ancient Mariner," printed with the "Lyrical Ballads," one of his earliest works, is still his finest poem—at once the most vigorous in design and the most chaste in execution—developing the intensest human affection, amidst the wildest scenery of a poet's dream. Nothing was too bright to hope from such a dawn. The mind of Coleridge seemed the harbinger of the golden years his enthusiasm predicted and painted;—of those days of peace on earth and good will among men, which the best and greatest minds have rejoiced to anticipate—and the earnest belief in which is better than all frivolous enjoyments, all worldly wisdom, all worldly success. And if the noontide of his genius did not fulfil his youth's promise of manly vigour, nor the setting of his earthly life honour it by an answering serenity of greatness—they still have left us abundant reason to be grateful that the glorious fragments of his mighty and imperfect being were ours. Cloud after cloud of German metaphysics rolled before his imagination—which it had power to irradiate with fantastic beauty, and to break into a thousand shifting forms of grandeur, though not to conquer; mist after mist ascended from those streams where earth and sky should have blended in one imagery, and were turned by its obscured glory to radiant haze; indulgence in the fearful luxury of that talismanic drug, which opens

glittering scenes of fantastic beauty on the waking soul to leave it in arid desolation, too often veiled it in partial eclipse, and blended fitful light with melancholy blackness over its vast domain; but the great central light remained unquenched, and cast its gleams through every department of human knowledge. A boundless capacity to receive and retain intellectual treasure made him the possessor of vaster stores of lore, classical, antiquarian, historical, biblical, and miscellaneous, than were ever vouchsafed, at least in our time, to a mortal being; goodly structures of divine philosophy rose before him like exhalations on the table-land of that his prodigious knowledge; but, alas! there was a deficiency of the power of voluntary action which would have left him unable to embody the shapes of a shepherd's dreams, and made him feeble as an infant before the overpowering majesty of his own! Hence his literary life became one splendid and sad prospectus—resembling only the portal of a mighty temple which it was forbidden us to enter—but whence strains of rich music issuing "took the prisoned soul and lapped it in Elysium," and fragments of ocular wisdom startled the thought they could not satisfy.

Hence the riches of his mind were developed, not in writing, but in his speech—conversation I can scarcely call it—which no one who once heard can ever forget. Unable to work in solitude, he sought the gentle stimulus of social admiration, and under its influence poured forth, without stint, the marvellous resources of a mind rich in the spoils of time—richer—richer far in its own glorious imagination and delicate fancy! There was a noble prodigality in these outpourings; a generous disdain of self; an

earnest desire to scatter abroad the seeds of wisdom and beauty, to take root wherever they might fall, and spring up without bearing his name or impress, which might remind the listener of the first days of poetry before it came to be individualised by the press, when the Homeric rhapsodist wandered through new-born cities and scattered hovels, flashing upon the minds of the wondering audience the bright train of heroic shapes, the series of godlike exploits, and sought no record more enduring than the fleshy tablets of his hearers' hearts; no memory but that of genial tradition; when copyright did not ascertain the reciter's property, nor marble at once perpetuate and shed chillness on his fame—

> "His bounty was as boundless as the sea,
> His love as deep."

Like the ocean, in all its variety of gentle moods, his discourse perpetually ebbed and flowed,—nothing in it angular, nothing of set purpose, but now trembling as the voice of divine philosophy, "not harsh nor crabbed, as dull fools suppose, but musical as is Apollo's lute," was wafted over the summer wave: now glistening in long line of light over some obscure subject, like the path of moonlight on the black water; and, if ever receding from the shore, driven by some sudden gust of inspiration, disclosing the treasures of the deep, like the rich strond in Spenser, "far sunken in their sunless treasuries," to be covered anon by the foam of the same immortal tide. The benignity of his manner befitted the beauty of his disquisitions; his voice rose from the gentlest pitch of conversation to the height of impassioned eloquence without effort, as his language expanded from some common topic of the day to the loftiest abstractions; ascending by a

winding track of spiral glory to the highest truths which the naked eye could discern, and suggesting starry regions, beyond, which his own telescopic gaze might possibly decipher. If his entranced hearers often were unable to perceive the bearings of his argument—too mighty for any grasp but his own—and sometimes reaching beyond his own—they understood "a *beauty* in the words, if not the words;" and a wisdom and piety in the illustrations, even when unable to connect them with the idea which he desired to illustrate. If an entire scheme of moral philosophy was never developed by him either in speaking or writing, all the parts were great: vast biblical knowledge, though sometimes eddying in splendid conjecture, was always employed with pious reverence; the morality suggested was at once elevated and genial; the charity hoped all things; and the mighty imaginative reasoner seemed almost to realize the condition suggested by the great Apostle, "that he understood all mysteries and all knowledge, and spake with the tongues both of men and angels!"

After Coleridge had found his last earthly refuge, under the wise and generous care of Mr. Gilman, at Highgate, he rarely visited Lamb, and my opportunities of observing him ceased. From those who were more favoured, as well as from the fragments I have seen of his last effusions, I know that, amidst suffering and weakness, his mighty mind concentrated its energies on the highest subjects which had ever kindled them; that the speculations, which sometimes seemed like paradox, because their extent was too vast to be comprehended in a single grasp of intellectual vision, were informed by a serener wisdom; that his perceptions of the central truth became more un-

divided, and his piety more profound and humble. His love for Charles and Mary Lamb continued, to the last, one of the strongest of his human affections—of which, by the kindness of a friend,[1] I possess an affecting memorial under his hand, written in the margin of a volume of his "Sibylline Leaves," which—after his life-long habit—he has enriched by manuscript annotations. The poem, beside which it is inscribed, is entitled "The Lime Tree Bower my Prison," composed by the poet in June, 1796, when Charles and Mary Lamb, who were visiting at his cottage near Bristol, had left him for a walk, which an accidental lameness prevented him from sharing. The visitors are not indicated by the poem, except that Charles is designated by the epithet, against which he jestingly remonstrated, as "gentle-hearted Charles;" and is represented as "winning his way, with sad and patient soul, through evil and pain, and strange calamity."[2]

Against the title is written as follows:—

CH. & MARY LAMB,
dear to my heart, yea,
as it were, *my heart*,
S. T. C. Æt. 63. 1834.
1797
1834.

37 years!

[1] Mr. Richard Welsh, of Reading, editor of the *Berkshire Chronicle*—one of the ablest productions of the Conservative Periodical Press.

[2] The whole passage is worth quoting here:—

"Yes, they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast lived
And hungered after Nature many a year
In the great city pent, winning thy way

This memorandum, which is penned with remarkable neatness, must have been made in Coleridge's last illness, as he suffered acutely for several months before he died, in July of this same year, 1834. What a space did that thirty-seven years of fond regard for the brother and sister occupy in a mind like Coleridge's, peopled with immortal thoughts which might multiply in the true time, dialled in heaven, its minutes into years!

These friends of Lamb's whom I have ventured to sketch in companionship with him, and Southey also, whom I only once saw, are all gone;—and others of less note in the world's eye have followed them. Among those of the old set who are gone, is Manning[1],

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With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain,
And strange calamity . . . Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow be, but Nature there;
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! *and sometime*
'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beats its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light,)
Had crossed the mighty orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing, or, when all was still,
Flew croaking o'er thy head, *and had a charm*
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles! *to whom*
No sound is dissonant that tells of life."—F.

[1] Manning died Queen's Serjeant in 1866. Lamb told Mr. C. Robinson that he thought him "the most wonderful man of his acquaintance."—F.

perhaps, next to Coleridge, the dearest of them, whom Lamb used to speak of as marvellous in a *tête-à-tête*, but who, in company, seemed only a courteous gentleman, more disposed to listen than to talk. In good old age departed Admiral Burney, frank-hearted voyager with Captain Cook round the world, who seemed to unite our society with the circle over which Dr. Johnson reigned; who used to tell of school-days under the tutelage of Eugene Aram; how he remembered the gentle usher pacing the play-ground arm-in-arm with some one of the elder boys, and seeking relief from the unsuspected burthen of his conscience by talking of strange murders, and how he, a child, had shuddered at the handcuffs on his teacher's hands when taken away in the post-chaise to prison;—the Admiral being himself the centre of a little circle which his sister, the famous authoress of "Evelina," "Cecilia," and "Camilla," sometimes graced. John Lamb, the jovial and burly, who dared to argue with Hazlitt on questions of art; Barron Field, who with veneration enough to feel all the despised greatness of Wordsworth, had a sparkling vivacity, and, connected with Lamb by the link of Christ's Hospital associations, shared largely in his regard; Rickman, the sturdiest of jovial companions, severe in the discipline of whist as at the table of the House of Commons, of which he was the principal clerk; and Alsager, so calm, so bland, so considerate—all are gone. These were all Temple guests—friends of Lamb's early days; but the companions of a later time, who first met in Great Russell Street, or Dalston, or Islington, or Enfield, have been wofully thinned; Allan Cunningham, stalwart of form and stout of heart and verse, a ruder Burns; Cary, Lamb's

"pleasantest of clergymen," whose sweetness of disposition and manner would have prevented a stranger from guessing that he was the poet who had rendered the adamantine poetry of Dante into English with kindred power; Hood, so grave and sad and silent, that you were astonished to recognise in him the outpourer of a thousand wild fancies, the detector of the inmost springs of pathos, and the powerful vindicator of poverty and toil before the hearts of the prosperous; the Reverend Edward Irving, who, after fulfilling an old prophecy he made in Scotland to Hazlitt, that he would astonish and shake the world by his preaching, sat humbly at the feet of Coleridge to listen to wisdom,—all are gone; the forms of others associated with Lamb's circle by more accidental links (also dead) come thronging on the memory from the mist of years—Alas; it is easier to count those that are left of the old familiar faces!

A short time only before Lamb's fatal illness, he yielded to my urgent importunity, and met a small party of his friends at dinner at my house, where we had provided for him some of the few articles of food which now seemed to hit his fancy, and among them the hare, which had supplanted pig in his just esteem, with the hope of exciting his very delicate appetite. We were not disappointed; he ate with a relish not usual with him of late years, and passed the evening in his happiest mood. Among the four or five who met him on this occasion, the last on which I saw him in health, were his old friends Mr. Barron Field, Mr. Procter, and Mr. Forster, the author of the "Lives of Eminent English Statesmen," a friend of comparatively recent date, but one with whom Lamb found himself as much at home as if he had known him for

years. Mr. Field in a short but excellent memoir of Lamb, in the "Annual Biography and Obituary" of 1836, has brought this evening vividly to recollection; and I have a melancholy satisfaction in quoting a passage from it as he has recorded it. After justly eulogising Lamb's sense of "The Virtue of Suppression in Writing," Mr. Field proceeds:—

"We remember, at the very last supper we ate with him, he quoted a passage from Prior's 'Henry and Emma,' illustrative of this discipline; and yet he said he loved Prior as much as any man, but that his 'Henry and Emma' was a vapid paraphrase of the old poem of 'The Nutbrowne Mayde.' For example, at the *dénouement* of the ballad Prior makes Henry rant out to his devoted Emma—

> 'In me behold the potent Edgar's heir,
> Illustrious Earl; him terrible in war.
> Let Loire confess, for she has felt his sword,
> And trembling fled before the British lord.'

And so on for a dozen couplets, heroic, as they are called. And then Mr. Lamb made us mark the modest simplicity with which the noble youth discloses himself to his mistress in the old poem:—

> 'Now, understand,
> To Westmoreland,
> *Which is my heritage,*'
> (in a parenthesis, as it were,)
> 'I will you bring,
> And with a ring,

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[1] In confirmation, the reader may be referred to the cordial and affectionate letters addressed to Mr. Forster, then a young *Litterateur*, which will be found in the correspondence. To this friend he presented a collection of his essays, cut out from the various magazines in which they had appeared, with his MS. alterations, and characteristically labelled, "TAG RAG AND BOB TAIL."—F.

By way of marriage,
I will you take,
And lady make,
As shortly as I can.
So have you won
An Earle's son,
And not a banish'd man.

"How he loved these old rhymes, and with what justice!"

The following little note has a mournful interest, as Lamb's last scrap of writing. It is dated on the very day on which erysipelas followed the accident, apparently trifling, which, five days after, terminated in his death. It is addressed to the wife of his oldest surviving friend :—" Dear Mrs. Dyer," he wrote on Dec. 22nd, 1834, " I am very uneasy about a *Book* which I either have lost or left at your house on Thursday. It was the book I went out to fetch from Miss Buffam's, while the tripe was frying. It is called ' Phillips's Theatrum Poetarum,' but it is an English book. I think I left it in the parlour. It is Mr. Cary's book, and I would not lose it for the world. Pray, if you find it, book it at the Swan, Snow Hill, by an Edmonton stage immediately, directed to Mr. Lamb, Church Street, Edmonton, or write to say you cannot find it. If it is lost, I shall never like tripe again. With kindest love to Mr. Dyer and all,—C. LAMB.[1]

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[1] Shortly before his death, Lamb had borrowed of Mr. Cary, Phillips's "Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum," which, when returned by Mr. Moxon, after the event, was found with the leaf folded down at the account of Sir Philip Sydney. Its receipt was acknowledged by the following lines :—

" So should it be, my gentle friend
Thy leaf last closed at Sydney's end.

A few days before this letter was written an accident befell Mr. Lamb, which seemed trifling at first, but which terminated in a fatal issue. In taking his daily morning walk on the London road as far as the inn where John Gilpin's ride is pictured, he stumbled against a stone, fell, and slightly injured his face.[1] The wounds seemed healing, when erysipelas in the head came on, and he sunk beneath the disease, happily without pain. On Friday evening Mr. Ryle, of the India House, who had been appointed co-executor with me of his will some years before, called on me, and informed me that he was in danger. I went over to Edmonton on the following morning, and found

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Thou too, like Sydney, wouldst have given,
The water, thirsting and near heaven;
Nay, were it wine, fill'd to the brim,
Thou hadst looked hard, but given, like him.

And art thou mingled then among
Those famous sons of ancient song?
And do they gather round, and praise
Thy relish of their nobler lays?
Waxing in mirth to hear thee tell
With what strange mortals thou didst dwell;
At thy quaint sallies more delighted,
Than any's long among them lighted!

'Tis done; and thou hast join'd a crew,
To whom thy soul was justly due;
And yet I think, where'er thou be,
They'll scarcely love thee more than we."

These lines, characteristic both of the writer and the subject, are copied from the Memoir of the translator of Dante, by his son, the Rev. Henry Cary, which, enriched by many interesting memorials of contemporaries, presents as valuable a picture of rare ability and excellence as ever was traced by the fine observation of filial love.

[1] A writer in *Notes and Queries* (1866) heard an account of the accident from an Edmonton tradesman, who ran to help Lamb.—F.

him very weak, and nearly insensible to things passing around him. Now and then a few words were audible, from which it seemed that his mind, in its feebleness, was intent on kind and hospitable thoughts. His last correspondent, Mr. Childs, had sent a present of a turkey, instead of the suggested pig; and the broken sentences which could be heard, were of some meeting of friends to partake of it. I do not think he knew me; and having vainly tried to engage his attention, I quitted him, not believing his death so near at hand. In less than an hour afterwards his voice gradually grew fainter, as he still murmured the names of Moxon, Procter, and some other old friends, and sank into death as placidly as into sleep.[1] On the following Saturday his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister, on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried.[2]

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[1] "I first heard of his illness last Friday night, and on Saturday morning I went to see him. The immediate cause of his decease was erysipelas; but it was in truth a breaking up of the constitution, and he died from mere weakness. When I saw him, the disease had so altered him that it was a very melancholy sight; his mind was then almost gone, and I do not think he was conscious of my presence. He did not, I believe, suffer any pain, nor was he at all conscious of danger. Ryle saw him the day before; *then* he was perfectly sensible, talked of common things, and said he was only weak, and should be well in a day or two. He died within two hours after I saw him."—*Talfoura to H. Crabb Robinson, Dec* 31, 1836.

"When the presence was suggested of a clergyman," says Mr Procter, "he made no remark, but understood that his life was in danger; he was quite calm, and collected, and quite resigned."—F.

[2] Though unconscious of the calamity that had befallen her, she was able to go to the churchyard and point out the place to one of the executors.—F.

So died, in the sixtieth year of his age, one of the most remarkable and amiable men who have ever lived. Few of his numerous friends were aware of his illness before they heard of his death; and, until that illness seized him, he had appeared so little changed by time, so likely to continue for several years, and he was so intimately associated with every-day engagements and feelings, that the news was as strange as it was mournful. When the first sad surprise was over, several of his friends strove to do justice to their own recollections of him; and articles upon his character and writings, all written out of the heart, appeared from Mr. Procter in the *Athenæum*, from Mr. Forster in the *New Monthly Magazine*,[1] from Mr. Patmore in the *Court Magazine*, and from Mr. Moxon in Leigh Hunt's *London Journal*, besides others whose authors are unknown to me; and subsequently many affectionate allusions, from pens which his own had inspired, have been gleaned out in various passages of *Blackwood*, *Fraser*, *Tait*, and almost every periodical work of reputation. The "Recollections of Coleridge," by Mr. Allsop, also breathed the spirit of admiration for his elevated genius, which the author—one whom Lamb held in the highest esteem for himself, and for his devotion to Coleridge—had for years expressed both in his words and in deeds.

[1] Mr. Forster's monograph will be found at the end of this memoir.—F.

CHAPTER XI.

Mary Lamb.

Little could any one, observing Miss Lamb in the habitual serenity of her demeanour, guess the calamity in which she had partaken, or the malady which frightfully chequered her life. From Mr. Lloyd, who, although saddened by impending delusion, was always found accurate in his recollection of long past events and conversations, I learned that she had described herself, on her recovery from the fatal attack, as having experienced, while it was subsiding, such a conviction that she was absolved in heaven from all taint of the deed in which she had been the agent—such an assurance that it was a dispensation of Providence for good, though so terrible—such a sense, that her mother knew her entire innocence, and shed down blessings upon her, as though she had seen the reconcilement in solemn vision—that she was not sorely afflicted by the recollection. It was as if the old Greek notion, of the necessity for the unconscious shedder of blood, else polluted though guiltless, to pass through a religious purification, had, in her case, been happily accomplished; so that, not only was she without remorse, but without other sorrow than attends on the death of an infirm parent in a good old age. She never shrank from alluding to her mother, when any topic connected with her own youth made such a reference, in ordinary respects, natural; but spoke of

her as though no fearful remembrance was associated with the image; so that some of her most intimate friends, who knew of the disaster, believed that she had never become aware of her own share in its horrors. It is still more singular that, in the wanderings of her insanity, amidst all the vast throngs of imagery she presented of her early days, this picture never recurred, or, if ever, not associated with shapes of terror.[1]

Miss Lamb would have been remarkable for the sweetness of her disposition, the clearness of her understanding, and the gentle wisdom of all her acts and words, even if these qualities had not been presented in marvellous contrast with the distraction under which she suffered for weeks, latterly for months, in every year. There was no tinge of insanity discernible in her manner to the most observant eye; not even in those distressful periods when the premonitory symptoms had apprised her of its approach, and she was making preparations for seclusion. In all its essential sweetness, her character was like her brother's; while, by a temper more placid, a spirit of enjoyment more serene, she was enabled to guide, to counsel, to cheer him, and to protect him on the verge of the mysterious calamity, from the depths of which she rose so often unruffled to his side. To a friend in any difficulty she was the most comfortable of advisers, the wisest of consolers. Hazlitt used to say, that he never met with a woman who could reason, and had met with only one

[1] From a letter of Lamb's to Mr. Hudson, the asylum where she was usually confined, seems to have been Mr. Warburton's, Whitmore House, Hoxton.—F.

thoroughly reasonable — the sole exception being Mary Lamb. She did not wish, however, to be made an exception, to a general disparagement of her sex; for in all her thoughts and feelings she was most womanly—keeping, under even undue subordination, to her notion of a woman's province, intellect of rare excellence, which flashed out when the restraints of gentle habit and humble manner were withdrawn by the terrible force of disease. Though her conversation in sanity was never marked by smartness or repartee, seldom rising beyond that of a sensible quiet gentlewoman appreciating and enjoying the talents of her friends, it was otherwise in her madness. Lamb, in his letter to a female friend, announcing his determination to be entirely with her, speaks of her pouring out memories of all the events and persons of her younger days; but he does not mention, what I am able from repeated experiences to add, that her ramblings often sparkled with brilliant description and shattered beauty. She would fancy herself in the days of Queen Anne or George the First, and describe the brocaded dames and courtly manners, as though she had been bred among them, in the best style of the old comedy. It was all broken and disjointed, so that the hearer could remember little of her discourse; but the fragments were like the jewelled speeches of Congreve, only shaken from their setting. There was sometimes even a vein of crazy logic running through them, associating things essentially most dissimilar, but connecting them by a verbal association in strange order. As a mere physical instance of deranged intellect, her condition was, I believe, extraordinary; it was as if the finest elements of mind had been shaken into fantastic combinations

like those of a kaleidoscope;—but not for the purpose of exhibiting a curious phenomenon of mental aberration are the aspects of her insanity unveiled, but to illustrate the moral force of gentleness by which the faculties that thus sparkled when restraining wisdom was withdrawn, were subjected to its sway, in her periods of reason.[1]

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[1] Even after this touching picture of a weary, desolate life, the reader will wish for something more distinct and detailed of so interesting a character. Her devotion to her brother, as well as the effect of the always impending trial, is sufficiently brought out; but there was another side to her nature—her share in society, her eager interest in her friends, as well as her literary abilities, which has not received enough prominence. A collection of her letters, recently published by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt, offers some touches of character charmingly revealed: her earnest solicitude upon the success of a love-match of her friend, Miss Stoddart; the personal sincerity and originality of her counsels, the quaintness of her ideas, and the simple and genuine style of her writing. Her friend was later to become the wife of Wm. Hazlitt, from whom she was to be divorced so strangely. Mary Lamb entered with almost girlish enthusiasm into the details of the preparations, dress, etc.; but how incomparably wise and practical were her more sober counsels, the following extracts will show:—

"My Aunt & my Mother were wholly unlike you and your sister, yet in some degree theirs is the secret history I believe of all sisters-in-law—and you will smile when I tell you I think myself the only woman in the world who could live with a brother's wife, and make a real friend of her, partly from early observation of the unhappy example I have just given you, and partly from a knack I know I have of looking into people's real characters, and never expecting them to act out of it—never expecting another to do as I would do in the same case. When you leave your Mother, and say, if you shall never see her again, you shall feel no remorse, and when you make a *jewish* bargain with your *Lover*, all this gives me no offence, because it is your nature, and your temper, and I do not expect or want you to be otherwise than you are. I love you for the good that is in you, and look for no change.

"*But*, certainly, you ought to struggle with the evil that does most easily beset you—a total want of politeness in behaviour, I would say

The following letter from Miss Lamb to Miss Wordsworth, on one of the chief external events of Lamb's

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modesty of behaviour, but that I should not convey to you my idea of the word modesty; for I certainly do not mean that you want *real modesty;* and what is usually called false, or mock modesty is what I certainly do not wish you to possess; yet I trust you know what I mean well enough.

"*Secrecy,* though you appear all frankness, is certainly a grand failing of yours, it is likewise your *brother's,* and, therefore, a family failing—by secrecy, I mean that you both want the habit of telling each other at the moment every thing that happens—where you go,—and what you do,—that free communication of letters and opinions just as they arrive, as Charles and I do,—and which is, after all, the only groundwork of friendship. Your brother, I will answer for, will never tell his wife or his sister all that [is in] his mind—he will receive letters and not [mention it]—this is a fault Mrs. Stoddart can never [tell him of;] but she can and will, feel it: though, [on] the whole, and in every other respect, she is [very] happy with him. Begin, for God's sake, at the first, and tell her every thing that passes—at first she may hear you with indifference; but in time this will gain her affection and confidence—show her all your letters (no matter if she does not show hers); it is a pleasant thing for a friend to put into one's hand a letter just fresh from the post. I would even say, begin with showing her this, but that it is written freely and loosely, and some apology ought to be made for it—which I know not how to make, for I must write freely or not at all.

"If you do this she will tell your brother, you will say; and what then, quotha? It will beget a freer communication amongst you, which is a thing devoutly to be wished.

This blending of tender sympathy with a wholesome plain speaking, is even better shown in the following:—

"Let me know upon what plan you mean to come to Town. Your brother proposed your being six months in Town, & six with your Mother; but he did not then know of your poor Mother's illness. By his desire, I enquired for a respectable family for you to board with; & from Captn. Burney I heard of one I thought would suit you at that time, he particularly desires I would not think of your being with us, not thinking, I conjecture, the home of a single man *respectable* enough. Your brother gave me most unlimited orders to domineer

history, the removal from the Temple to Covent Garden, will illustrate the cordial and womanly strain

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over you, to be the inspector of all your actions, & to direct & govern you with a stern voice & a high hand, to be, in short, a very elder brother over you—does not the hearing of this, my meek pupil, make you long to come to London? I am making all the proper enquiries against the time of the newest & most approved modes (being myself mainly ignorant in these points) of etiquette & nicely correct maidenly manners.

"But to speak seriously. I mean when we mean [meet], that we will lay our heads together, & consult & contrive the best way of making the best girl in the world the fine Lady her brother wishes to see her; & believe me, Sarah, it is not so difficult a matter as one is apt to imagine. I have observed many a demure Lady, who passes muster admirably well, who, I think, we could easily learn to imitate in a week or two. We will talk of these things when we meet.

"I seem, upon looking over my letter again, to have written too lightly of your distresses at Malta; but, however I may have written, believe me, I enter very feelingly into all your troubles. I love you, & I love your brother; & between you, both of whom I think have been to blame, I know not what to say—only this I say, try to think as little as possible of past miscarriages; it was, perhaps, so ordered by Providence, that you might return home to be a comfort to your poor Mother. And do not, I conjure you, let her unhappy malady afflict you too deeply. I speak from experience, & from the opportunity I have had of much observation in such cases, that insane people, in the fancy's they take into their heads, do not feel as one in a sane state of mind does under the real evil of poverty, the perception of having done wrong, or any such thing that runs in their heads.

"Think as little as you can, & let your whole care be to be certain that she is treated with *tender*ness. I lay a stress upon this, because it is a thing of which people in her state are uncommonly susceptible, & which hardly any one is at all aware of, a hired nurse *never*, even though in all other respects they are good kind of people. I do not think your own presence necessary, unless she *takes to you very much*, except for the purpose of seeing with your own eyes that she is very kindly treated.

"I do long to see you! God bless and comfort you!

"Yours affectionately, "M. Lamb."—F.

of her observation on the occurrences of daily life, and afford a good idea of her habitual conversation among her friends :—[1]

"My dear Miss Wordsworth,—Your kind letter has given us very great pleasure, the sight of your handwriting was a most welcome surprise to us. We have heard good tidings of you by all our friends who were so fortunate as to visit you this summer, and rejoice to see it confirmed by yourself. You have quite the advantage, in volunteering a letter; there is no merit in replying to so welcome a stranger.

"We have left the Temple. I think you will be sorry to hear this. I know I have never been so well satisfied with thinking of you at Rydal Mount, as when I could connect the idea of you with your own Grasmere Cottage. Our rooms were dirty and out of repair, and the inconveniences of living in chambers became every year more irksome, and so, at last, we mustered up resolution enough to leave the good old place, that so long had sheltered us, and here we are, living at a brazier's shop, No. 20, in Russell Street,

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[1] "I have a clear recollection," says Mr. Allsop, recalling some domestic trouble, "of Miss Lamb's addressing me in *a tone* acting *at once* as a solace and support, and afterwards as a stimulus, to which I owe more, perhaps, than to the extended *arguments* of all others."

As was the style of her letters, so was the style of her books; natural, unaffected, and quaint. Mr. Landor, in a letter to Lady Blessington, dwells with rapture on one touch in "Mrs. Leicester's School," where a little child, on the morning of her father's second marriage, is so delighted with the dress prepared for her, that she joyously wishes her mamma was there to see it. The enduring popularity of the "Tales from Shakespeare," is further evidence of her gifts; and it appears that her brother was eager that she should attempt a regular work for the stage. She once applied to a friend to furnish her with a regular story to dramatise.—F.

Covent Garden, a place all alive with noise and bustle ; Drury Lane Theatre in sight from our front, and Covent Garden from our back windows. The hubbub of the carriages returning from the play does not annoy me in the least ; strange that it does not, for it is quite tremendous. I quite enjoy looking out of the window, and listening to the calling up of the carriages, and the squabbles of the coachmen and link-boys. It is the oddest scene to look down upon ; I am sure you would be amused with it. It is well I am in a cheerful place, or I should have many misgivings about leaving the Temple. I look forward with great pleasure to the prospect of seeing my good friend, Miss Hutchinson. I wish Rydal Mount, with all its inhabitants enclosed, were to be transplanted with her, and to remain stationary in the midst of Covent Garden.

* * * * * *

"Charles has had all his Hogarths bound in a book ; they were sent home yesterday, and now that I have them all together, and perceive the advantage of peeping close at them through my spectacles, I am reconciled to the loss of them hanging round the room, which has been a great mortification to me—in vain I tried to console myself with looking at our new chairs and carpets, for we have got new chairs, and carpets covering all over our two sitting-rooms ; I missed my old friends, and could not be comforted—then I would resolve to learn to look out of the window, a habit I never could attain in my life, and I have given it up as a thing quite impracticable—yet when I was at Brighton, last summer, the first week I never took my eyes off from the sea, not even to look in a book: I had not seen the sea for sixteen years

Mrs. M——, who was with us, kept her liking, and continued her seat in the window till the very last, while Charles and I played truants, and wandered among the hills, which we magnified into little mountains, and *almost as good as* Westmoreland scenery: certainly we made discoveries of many pleasant walks, which few of the Brighton visitors have ever dreamed of—for like as is the case in the neighbourhood of London, after the first two or three miles we were sure to find ourselves in a perfect solitude. I hope we shall meet before the walking faculties of either of us fail; you say you can walk fifteen miles with ease; that is exactly my stint, and more fatigues me; four or five miles every third or fourth day, keeping very quiet between, was all Mrs. M—— could accomplish.

"God bless you and yours. Love to all and each one.

"I am ever yours most affectionately,

"M. LAMB."

Of that deeper vein of sentiment in Mary Lamb, seldom revealed, the following passages from a letter to the same lady, referring to the death of a brother of her beloved correspondent, may be offered as a companion specimen:—

"My dear Miss Wordsworth,—I thank you, my kind friend, for your most comfortable letter; till I saw your own handwriting I could not persuade myself that I should do well to write to you, though I have often attempted it; but I always left off dissatisfied with what I had written, and feeling that I was doing an improper thing to intrude upon your sorrow. I wished to tell you that you would one day feel the kind of peaceful state of mind and sweet memory of the dead, which you so happily describe as now almost

begun; but I felt that it was improper, and most grating to the feelings of the afflicted, to say to them that the memory of their affection would in time become a constant part, not only of their dream, but of their most wakeful sense of happiness. That you would see every object with and through your lost brother, and that that would at last become a real and everlasting source of comfort to you, I felt, and well knew, from my own experience in sorrow; but till you yourself began to feel this I did not dare to tell you so; but I send you some poor lines which I wrote under this conviction of mind, and before I heard Coleridge was returning home. I will transcribe them now, before I finish my letter, lest a false shame prevent me then, for I know they are much worse than they ought to be, written as they were, with strong feeling, and on such a subject; every line seems to be to be borrowed, but I had no better way of expressing my thoughts, and I never have the power of altering or amending anything I have once laide aside with dissatisfaction.

"Why is he wandering on the sea?—
Coleridge should now with Wordsworth be.
By slow degrees he'd steal away
Their woe, and gently bring a ray
(So happily he'd time relief,)
Of comfort from their very grief.
He'd tell them that their brother dead,
When years have passèd o'er their head,
Will be remembered with such holy,
True, and perfect melancholy,
That ever this lost brother John
Will be their heart's companion.
His voice they'll always hear,
His face they'll always see;
There's nought in life so sweet
As such a memory."

The excellence of Mary Lamb's nature was happily developed in her portion of those books for children—"wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best,"—which she wrote in conjunction with her brother, the "Poetry for Children," the "Tales from Shakespeare," and "Mrs. Leicester's School." How different from the stony nutriment provided for those delicate, apprehensive, affectionate creatures, in the utilitarian books, which starve their little hearts, and stuff their little heads with shallow science, and impertinent facts, and selfish morals! One verse, which she did not print—the conclusion of a little poem supposed to be expressed in a letter by the son of a family who, when expecting the return of its father from sea, received news of his death,—recited by her to Mr. Martin Burney, and retained in his fond recollection, may afford a concluding example of the healthful wisdom of her lessons:—

"I can no longer feign to be
A thoughtless child in infancy;
I tried to write like young Marie,
But I am James her brother;
And I can feel—but she's too young—
Yet blessings on her prattling tongue,
She sweetly soothes my mother."

Contrary to Lamb's expectations, who feared (as also his friends feared with him) the desolation of his own survivorship, which the difference of age rendered probable, Miss Lamb survived him for nearly thirteen years. When he died she was mercifully in a state of partial estrangement, which, while it did not wholly obscure her mind, deadened her feelings, so that as she gradually regained her perfect senses she felt as gradually the full force of the blow, and was the better

able calmly to bear it.[1] For awhile she declined the importunities of her friends, that she would leave Edmonton for a residence nearer London, where they might more frequently visit her. *He* was there, asleep in the old churchyard, beneath the turf near which they had stood together, and had selected for a resting-place;[2] to this spot she used, when well, to stroll

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[1] A month later, Mr. Crabb Robinson found his way down to Edmonton to see her, and gives the following pathetic description of the bereaved sister's state:—

"A melancholy sight," he writes. "She was neither violent nor unhappy; nor was she entirely without sense. A stranger would have seen little remarkable about her. She was, however, out of her mind, as the expression is; but she would combine ideas imperfectly. On my going into the room where she was sitting with Mr. Walden, she exclaimed with great vivacity, '*Oh, here's Crabby!*' She gave me her hand with great cordiality, and said, 'Now, this is very kind—not merely goodnatured, but very, very kind to come and see me in my affliction.' And she ran on about the unhappy insane family of my old friend, ——. Her mind seemed to turn to subjects connected with insanity, as well as with her brother's death. She spoke of his birth, and said he was a weakly but very pretty child. I have no doubt but that if she ever be sensible of her brother's loss it will overset her again. She will live for ever in the memory of her friends as one of the most amiable and admirable of women."—F.

[2] About a year later she was restored, and her friends were delighted to meet her of an evening at Mr. Moxon's. "She was very comfortable," says Mr. C. Robinson, "not in high spirits, but calm, and she seemed to enjoy the sight of so many old friends. There were Cary, Alsop, and Miss James. There was no direct talk about her brother. Wordsworth's epitaph she disapproves of. She does not like any allusion to his being a clerk, or to family misfortunes." A little scene that recalls Boswell's account of Mrs. Garrick after her bereavement, when she, too, spoke cheerfully, and looking at her husband's portrait, talked of the time when she would meet him again. In August, 1837, he again paid her visit, when she took him to her brother's grave. Soon the forebodings of her friend were to be realized, and over the last years of the faithful sister settled the darkest clouds. In August, 1839,

out mournfully in the evening, and to this spot she would contrive to lead any friend who came in the summer evenings to drink tea and went out with her afterwards for a walk.[1] At length, as her illness

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we have this sad glimpse of her: "Mary Lamb," writes Mr. Robinson, "has been ill for nine months. Her mind is gone, or at least inert. She says she bears solitude better than she did." And then the kind-hearted visitor sat down and tried to divert what her mother sixty years before called her "poor moythered wits," with a game of piquet. In March, 1843, he was with her again, and found that even these faint sparks of intelligence had fled. She was now "a mere wreck of herself." Then came release, and the last scene of all, the unostentatious progress from St. John's Wood to Edmonton. Mr. Crabb Robinson adds a few details to Talfourd's simple description. "Two mourning coaches," he writes, "accompanied the body to Enfield across a pretty country. The heat was oppressive. We took refreshment at the nouse where dear Charles Lamb died. The attendant mourners—a most unsuitable word, for we all felt her departure was a relief—were Talfourd, Ryle, and Arnold (of the India House) Lamb's two executors, Moxon, myself, Martin Burney, Alsop, Moxhay, and Forster, the clever writer in the *Examiner*. No sadness was assumed," etc. —F.

[1] Landor's affectionate interest in brother and sister is shown by his touching sonnet:

TO THE SISTER OF CHARLES LAMB.

"Comfort thee, O thou mourner, yet awhile!
Again shall Elia's smile
Refresh thy heart, when heart can ache no more.
What is it we deplore?
He leaves behind him, freed from griefs and years
Far worthier things than tears:
The love of friends without a single foe,
Unequall'd lot below!
His gentle soul, his genius these are thine;
Shalt thou for those repine?
He may have left the lowly walks of men.
Left them he has. What then?

became more frequent, and her frame much weaker, she was induced to take up her abode under genial care, at a pleasant house in St. John's Wood, where she was surrounded by the old books and prints, and was frequently visited by her reduced number of surviving friends. Repeated attacks of her malady weakened her mind, but she retained to the last her sweetness of disposition unimpaired, and gently sunk into death on the 20th of May, 1847.

A few survivors of the old circle, now sadly thinned,

Are not his footsteps followed by the eyes
Of all the good and wise?
Tho' the warm day is over, yet they seek
Upon the lofty peak
Of his pure mind the roseate light that glows
O'er Death's perennial snows,
Behold him! From the spirits of the Blest
He speaks, he bids thee rest."—F.

The following Sonnet, by Mr. Moxon, written at this period of tranquil sadness in Miss Lamb's life, so beautifully embodies the reverential love with which the sleeping and the mourning were regarded by one of their nearest friends, that I gratify myself by extracting it from the charming little volume of his Sonnets, which it adorns:—

"Here sleeps, beneath this bank, where daisies grow,
The kindliest sprite earth holds within her breast;
In such a spot I would this frame should rest,
When I to join my friend far hence shall go.
His only mate is now the minstrel lark,
Who chants her morning music o'er his bed,
Save she who comes each evening, ere the bark
Of watch-dog gathers drowsy folds, to shed
A sister's tears. Kind Heaven, upon her head,
Do thou in dove-like guise thy spirit pour,
And in her aged path some flowerets spread
Of earthly joy, should Time for her in store
Have weary days and nights, ere she shall greet
Him whom she longs in Paradise to meet."

attended her remains to the spot in Edmonton church yard, where they were laid above those of her brother. With them was one friend of later days—but who had become to Lamb as one of his oldest companions, and for whom Miss Lamb cherished a strong regard —Mr. John Forster, the author of "The Life of Goldsmith," in which Lamb would have rejoiced, as written in a spirit congenial with his own. In accordance with Lamb's own feeling, so far as it could be gathered from his expressions on a subject to which he did not often, or willingly, refer, he had been interred in a deep grave, simply dug, and wattled round, but without any affectation of stone or brick-work to keep the human dust from its kindred earth. So dry, however, is the soil of the quiet churchyard that the excavated earth left perfect walls of stiff clay, and permitted us just to catch a glimpse of the still untarnished edges of the coffin in which all the mortal part of one of the most delightful persons who ever lived was contained, and on which the remains of her he had loved with love "passing the love of woman" were henceforth to rest;—the last glances we shall ever have even of that covering;—concealed from us as we darted, by the coffin of the sister. We felt, I believe, after a moment's strange shuddering, that the reunion was well accomplished; and although the true-hearted son of Admiral Burney, who had known and loved the pair we quitted, from a child, and who had been the dearest objects of existence to him, refused to be comforted,—even he will join the scanty remnant of their friends in the softened remembrance that "they were lovely in their lives," and own with them the consolation of adding at last, "that in death they are not divided!"

CHAPTER XII.

Lamb fully known.—His Character.

The story of the lives of Charles and Mary Lamb is now told; nothing more remains to be learned respecting it. The known collateral branches of this stock are extinct, and their upward pedigree lost in those humble tracks on which the steps of Time leave so light an impress, that the dust of a few years obliterates all trace, and affords no clue to search collaterally for surviving relatives. The world has therefore all the materials for judging of them which can be possessed by those, who, not remembering the delightful peculiarities of their daily manners, can only form imperfect ideas of what they were. Before bidding them a last adieu, we may be allowed to linger a little longer and survey their characters by the new and solemn lights which are now, for the first time, fully cast upon them.

Except to the few who were acquainted with the tragical occurrences of Lamb's early life, some of his peculiarities seemed strange—to be forgiven, indeed, to the excellences of his nature, and the delicacy of his genius,—but still, in themselves, as much to be wondered at as deplored. The sweetness of his character, breathed through his writings, was felt even by strangers; but its heroic aspect was unguessed, even by many of his friends. Let them now consider it, and ask if the annals of self-sacrifice can show

anything in human action and endurance more lovely than its self-devotion exhibits! It was not merely that he saw (which his elder brother cannot be blamed for not immediately perceiving) through the ensanguined cloud of misfortune which had fallen upon his family, the unstained excellence of his sister, whose madness had caused it; that he was ready to take her to his own home with reverential affection, and cherish her through life; that he gave up, for her sake, all meaner and more selfish love, and all the hopes which youth blends with the passion which disturbs and ennobles it: not even that he did all this cheerfully, and without pluming himself upon his brotherly nobleness as a virtue, or seeking to repay himself (as some uneasy martyrs do) by small instalments of long repining,—but that he carried the spirit of the hour in which he first knew and took his course, to the last. So far from thinking that his sacrifice of youth and love to his sister gave him a license to follow his own caprice at the expense of her feelings, even in the lightest matters, he always wrote and spoke of her as his wiser self; his generous benefactress, of whose protecting care he was scarcely worthy. How his pen almost grew wanton in her praise, even when she was a prisoner in the Asylum after the fatal attack of lunacy, his letters of the time to Coleridge show; but that might have been a mere temporary exaltation—the attendant fervour of a great exigency and a great resolution. It was not so; nine years afterwards (1805), in a letter to Miss Wordsworth, he thus dilates on his sister's excellences, and exaggerates his own frailties:—

"To say all that I know of her would be more than

I think anybody could believe or even understand; and when I hope to have her well again with me, it would be sinning against her feelings to go about to praise her; for I can conceal nothing that I do from her. She is older, and wiser, and better than I, and all my wretched imperfections I cover to myself by resolutely thinking on her goodness. She would share life and death, heaven and hell, with me. She lives but for me; and I know I have been wasting and teasing her life for five years past incessantly with my cursed ways of going on. But even in this upbraiding of myself I am offending against her, for I know that she has cleaved to me for better, for worse; and if the balance has been against her hitherto, it 'was a noble trade.'"[1]

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[1] If the brother was always oppressed by the sense of her impending insanity, it seems that the sister had her trouble in the anxiety lest he should be tempted into some excess. This double "anangke" perpetually overshadowed their house. One of the curious touches in her home life is her acting as bridesmaid to Hazlitt's wife—Miss Stoddart. Mrs. Cowden Clarke recalls "a certain old-world fashion in Mary Lamb's diction which gave it a most natural and quaintly pleasant effect, and which heightened rather than detracted from the more heartfelt or important things she uttered. She had a way of repeating her brother's words assertingly when he spoke to her. He once said (with his peculiar mood of tenderness, beneath blunt, abrupt speech), 'You must die first, Mary.' She nodded, with her little quiet nod and sweet smile: 'Yes, I must die first, Charles.' At another time, he said, in his whimsical way, plucking out the words in gasps, as it were, between the smiles with which he looked at her: 'I call my sister "Moll," before the servants; "Mary," in presence of friends; and "Maria," when I am alone with her.'"

"All their personal thoughts, feelings, and associations," says Mr. Patmore, "were so entirely centred in those of each other, that it was only by an almost painful effort they were allowed to wander elsewhere, even at the brief intervals claimed by that social intercourse

Let it also be remembered that this devotion of the entire nature was not exercised merely in the consciousness of a past tragedy; but during the frequent recurrences of the calamity which caused it, and the constant apprehension of its terrors; and this for a large portion of life, in poor lodgings, where the brother and sister were, or fancied themselves, "marked people;" where from an income incapable of meeting the expense of the sorrow without sedulous privations, he contrived to hoard, not for holiday enjoyment, or future solace, but to provide for expected distress. Of the misery attendant on this anticipation, aggravated by jealous fears lest some imprudence or error of his own should have hastened the inevitable evil, we have a glimpse in the letter to Miss Wordsworth above quoted, and which seems to have been written in reply to one which that excellent lady had addressed to Miss Lamb, and which had fallen into the brother's care during one of her sad absences.

"Your long kind letter has not been thrown away, but poor Mary, to whom it is addressed, cannot yet relish it. She has been attacked by one of her severe illnesses, and is at present *from home*. Last Monday week was the day she left me; and I hope I may calculate upon having her again in a month or a little more. I am rather afraid late hours have, in this case, contributed to her indisposition. But when she begins to discover symptoms of approaching illness, it is not easy to say what is best to do. Being by ourselves is

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which they nevertheless could not persuade themselves wholly to shun. They had been for so many years accustomed to look to each other alone for sympathy and support, that they could scarcely believe these to exist apart from themselves. This gave to both an absent and embarrassed air."—F.

bad, and going out is bad. I get so irritable and wretched with fear, that I constantly hasten on the disorder. You cannot conceive the misery of such a foresight. I am sure that, for the week before she left me, I was little better than light-headed. I now am calm, but sadly taken down and flat. I have every reason to suppose that this illness, like all her former ones, will be but temporary. But I cannot always feel so. Meantime she is dead to me!"

The constant impendency of this giant sorrow saddened to "the Lambs" even their holidays; as the journey which they both regarded as the relief and charm of the year was frequently followed by a seizure; and, when they ventured to take it, a strait-waistcoat, carefully packed by Miss Lamb herself, was their constant companion. Sad experience, at last, induced the abandonment of the annual excursion, and Lamb was contented with walks in and near London, during the interval of labour. Miss Lamb experienced, and full well understood premonitory symptoms of the attack, in restlessness, low fever, and the inability to sleep; and, as gently as possible, prepared her brother for the duty he must soon perform; and thus, unless he could stave off the terrible separation till Sunday, obliged him to ask leave of absence from the office as if for a day's pleasure—a bitter mockery! On one occasion Mr. Charles Lloyd met them, slowly pacing together a little footpath in Hoxton fields, both weeping bitterly, and found on joining them, that they were taking their solemn way to the accustomed Asylum!

Will any one, acquainted with these secret passages of Lamb's history, wonder that, with a strong physical inclination for the stimulus and support of strong

drinks—which man is framed moderately to rejoice in —he should snatch some wild pleasure "between the acts" (as he called them) "of his distressful drama," and that, still more, during the loneliness of the solitude created by his sister's absences, he should obtain the solace of an hour's feverish dream? That, notwithstanding that frailty, he performed the duties of his hard lot with exemplary steadiness and discretion is indeed wonderful—especially when it is recollected that he had himself been visited, when in the dawn of manhood, with his sister's malady, the seeds of which were lurking in his frame. While that natural predisposition may explain an occasional flightiness of expression on serious matters, fruit of some wayward fancy, which flitted through his brain, without disturbing his constant reason or reaching his heart, and some little extravagances of fitful mirth, how does it heighten the moral courage by which the disease was controlled and the severest duties performed! Never surely was there a more striking example of the power of a virtuous, rather say, of a pious, wish to conquer the fiery suggestions of latent insanity than that presented by Lamb's history. Nervous, tremulous, as he seemed—so slight of frame that he looked only fit for the most placid fortune—when the dismal emergencies which chequered his life arose, he acted with as much promptitude and vigour as if he had never penned a stanza nor taken a glass too much, or was strung with herculean sinews. None of those temptations, in which misery is the most potent, to hazard a lavish expenditure for an enjoyment to be secured against fate and fortune, ever tempted him to exceed his income, when scantiest, by a shilling. He had always a reserve for poor Mary's periods of seclusion, and

something in hand besides for a friend in need;—and on his retirement from the India House, he had amassed, by annual savings, a sufficient sum (invested after the prudent and classical taste of Lord Stowell, in "the elegant simplicity of Three per Cents.") to secure comfort to Miss Lamb, when his pension should cease with him, even if the India Company, his great employers, had not acted nobly by the memory of their inspired clerk—as they did—and gave her the annuity to which a wife would have been entitled,[1] but of which he could not feel assured. Living among literary men, some less distinguished and less discreet than those we have mentioned, he was constantly importuned to relieve distresses which an improvident speculation in literature produces, and which the recklessness attendant on the empty vanity of self-exaggerated talent renders desperate and merciless;—and to the importunities of such hopeless petitioners he gave too largely—though he used sometimes to express a painful sense that he was diminishing his own store without conferring any real benefit. "Heaven," he used to say, "does not owe me sixpence for all I have given, or lent (as they call it) to such importunity; I only gave it because I could not bear to refuse it; and I have done no good by my weakness." On the other hand, he used to seek out occasions of devoting a part of his surplus to those of his friends whom he believed it would really serve, and almost forced loans, or gifts in the disguise of loans, upon them. If he thought one, in such a position, would be the happier for £50 or £100, he would carefully procure a note for the sum, and, perhaps, for days

[1] Her pension was fixed at £120.—F.

before he might meet the object of his friendly purpose, keep the note in his waistcoat pocket, burning in it to be produced, and, when the occasion arrived—"in the sweet of the night"—he would crumple it up in his hand and stammer out his difficulty of disposing of a little money; "I don't know what to do with it—pray take it—pray use it—you will do me a kindness if you will"—he would say; and it was hard to disoblige him![1]

Let any one who has been induced to regard Lamb as a poor, slight, excitable, and excited being, consider that such acts as these were not infrequent—that he exercised hospitality of a substantial kind, without stint, all his life—that he spared no expense for the comfort of his sister, *there* only lavish—and that he died leaving sufficient to accomplish all his wishes for survivors[2]—and think what the sturdy

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[1] This refers to Mr. Procter, who relates the story in his Recollections.

"He had," says Mr. Moxon, "for some years upon his bounty three pensioners. He allowed his old schoolmistress thirty pounds a year;" and to Morgan, a friend of Southey's, who was paralysed and suddenly reduced to poverty, he agreed to give a pension of ten pounds a year. But there is one instance of this noble being's generosity, beside which the lavish cheques of ostentatious charity seem paltry. Mr. Forster has found among his papers a circular that was sent out soliciting aid for Godwin—then much straitened in his means. Here Lord Byron contributes twenty-five guineas; Lord Dudley, fifty; Mackintosh, ten; Mr. Murray, of Albemarle Street, the same; but the generous Charles Lamb, out of his pittance, on which there were such pressing claims, gave fifty pounds!—F.

[2] "By strict economy, without meanness," says Mr. Procter, when closing his genial reminiscences; "with much unpretending hospitality; with frequent gifts and lendings, and without any borrowing, he accumulated, during his thirty-three years of constant labour, the moderate sum of £2000. No more. That was the sum, I believe,

quality of his goodness must have been amidst all the heart-aches and head-aches of his life—and ask the virtue which has been supported by strong nerves, whether it has often produced any good to match it?

The influence of the events now disclosed may be traced in the development and direction of Lamb's faculties and tastes, and in the wild contrasts of expression which sometimes startled strangers. The literary preferences disclosed in his early letters, are often inclined to the superficial in poetry and thought —the theology of Priestley, though embraced with pious earnestness—the "divine chit-chat" of Cowper —the melodious sadness of Bowles; and his own style, breathing a graceful and modest sweetness, is without any decided character. But by the terrible realities of his experience, he was turned to seek a kindred interest in the "sterner stuff" of old tragedy —to catastrophes more fearful even than his own—to the aspects of "pale passion"—to shapes of heroic daring and more heroic suffering—to the agonising contests of opposing affections, and the victories of the soul over calamity and death, which the old English drama discloses, and in the contemplation of which he saw his own suffering nature at one mirrored and exalted. Thus, instead of admiring, as he once

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which was eventually shared amongst his legatees. The property of Charles Lamb, or so much as might be wanted for the purpose, was by his will directed to be applied towards the maintenance and comfort of his sister: and subject to that primary object, it was vested in trustees for the benefit of Miss Isola—Mrs. Moxon."

I have searched at Doctors' Commons for his will, but without success. —F.

admired, Rowe and Otway,[1] even Massinger seemed too declamatory to satisfy him; in Ford, Decker, Marlowe and Webster, he found the most awful struggles of affection, and the "sad embroidery" of fancy-streaked grief, and expressed his kindred feelings in those little quintessences of criticism which are appended to the noblest scenes in his "Specimens;" and, seeking amidst the sunnier and more varied world of Shakespeare for the profoundest and most earnest passion developed there, obtained that marvellous insight into the soul of Lear which gives to his presentment of its riches almost the character of creation. On the other hand, it was congenial pastime with him to revel in the opposite excellences of Beaumont and Fletcher, who changed the domain of tragedy into fairy-land; turned all its terror and its sorrow "to favour and to prettiness;" shed the rainbow hues of sportive fancy with equal hand among tyrants and victims, the devoted and the faithless, suffering and joy; represented the beauty of goodness as a happy accident, vice as a wayward aberration, and invoked the remorse of a moment to change them as with a harlequin's wand; unrealized the terrible, and left "nothing serious in mortality," but reduced the struggle of life to a glittering and heroic game to be

[1] He used to mention two pretty lines in the "Orphan:"—

"Sweet as the shepherd's pipe upon the mountains,
With all his fleecy flock at feed beside him,"

as a redeeming passage amid mere stage trickeries. The great merit which lies in the construction of "Venice Preserved," was not in his line of appreciation; and he thought Thomson's reference to Otway's ladies:

—— "Poor Monimia moans,
And Belvedera pours her soul in love,"

worth both heroines.

played splendidly out, and quitted without a sigh. But neither Lamb's own secret griefs, nor the tastes which they nurtured, ever shook his faith in the requisitions of duty, or induced him to dally with that moral paradox to which near acquaintance with the great errors of mighty natures is sometimes a temptation. Never, either in writing or in speech, did he purposely confound good with evil. For the new theories of morals which gleamed out in the conversation of some of his friends, he had no sympathy; and, though in his boundless indulgence to the perversities and faults of those whom long familiarity had endeared to him, he did not suffer their frailties to impair his attachment to the individuals, he never palliated the frailties themselves; still less did he emblazon them as virtues.

No one, acquainted with Lamb's story, will wonder at the eccentric wildness of his mirth—his violent changes from the serious to the farcical—the sudden reliefs of the "heat-oppressed brain," and heart weighed down by the sense of ever-impending sorrow.[1] His

[1] A good specimen of this "eccentric wildness of his mirth," is the little scene described with such vivacity by Haydon, the painter. The dinner was given in 1817; Wordsworth, Keats, and a few more being the guests. "Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty, and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. 'Now,' said Lamb, 'you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. Well,' said Lamb, 'here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation, and a very proper one too.'

"He then, in a strain of humour beyond description, abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture,—'a fellow,' said he, 'who believed nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle.'

whim, however, almost always bordered on wisdom. It was justly said of him by Hazlitt, "His serious con-

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And then he and Keats agreed he had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank 'Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics.' It was delightful to see the good-humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation, and laughing as heartily as the best of us.

"By this time other friends joined, amongst them poor Ritchie, who was going to penetrate by Fezzan to Timbuctoo. I introduced him to all as 'a gentleman going to Africa.' Lamb seemed to take no notice; but all of a sudden he roared out, 'Which is the gentleman we are going to lose?' We then drank the victim's health, in which Ritchie joined.

"In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction. He told me he was a comptroller of stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come.

"When we retired to tea we found the comptroller. In introducing him to Wordsworth I forgot to say who he was. After a little time the comptroller looked down, looked up and said to Wordsworth, 'Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?' Keats looked at me, Wordsworth looked at the comptroller. Lamb who was dozing by the fire turned round and said, 'Pray, sir, did you say Milton was a great genius?' 'No, sir; I asked Mr. Wordsworth if he were not.' 'Oh,' said Lamb, 'then you are a silly fellow!' 'Charles! my dear Charles!' said Wordsworth; but Lamb, perfectly innocent of the confusion he had created, was off again by the fire.

"After an awful pause the comptroller said, 'Don't you think Newton a great genius?' I could not stand it any longer. Keats put his head into my books. Ritchie squeezed in a laugh. Wordsworth seemed asking himself, 'Who is this?' Lamb got up, and taking a candle, said, 'Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?' He then turned his back on the poor man, and at every question of the comptroller he chaunted—

'Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John
Went to bed with his breeches on.'

versation, like his serious writing, is his best. Nc one eyer stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half-a-dozen half sentences; his jests scald like tears, and he probes a question with a play on words."

Although Lamb's conversation vibrated between the intense and the grotesque, his writings are replete with quiet pictures of the humbler scenery of middle life, touched with a graceful and loving hand. We may trace in them the experience of a nature bred up in slender circumstances, but imbued with a certain

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The man in office, finding Wordsworth did not know who he was, said in a spasmodic and half-chuckling anticipation of assured victory, 'I have had the honour of some correspondence with you, Mr. Wordsworth.' 'With me, sir?' said Wordsworth, 'not that I remember.' 'Don't you, sir? I am a comptroller of stamps.' There was a dead silence;—the comptroller evidently thinking that was enough. While we were waiting for Wordsworth's reply, Lamb sung out:

'Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle.'

"'My dear Charles!' said Wordsworth,—

'Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John,'

chaunted Lamb, and then rising, exclaimed, 'Do let me have another look at that gentleman's organs.' Keats and I hurried Lamb into the painting-room, shut the door and gave way to inextinguishable laughter. Monkhouse followed and tried to get Lamb away. We went back but the comptroller was irreconcilable. We soothed and smiled and asked him to supper. He stayed though his dignity was sorely affected. However, being a good-natured man, we parted all in good-humour, and no ill effects followed.

"All the while, until Monkhouse succeeded, we could hear Lamb struggling in the painting-room and calling at intervals, 'Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more!'

"It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats' eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time."—F.

innate spirit of gentility suggesting a respect for all its moderate appliances and unambitious pleasures. The same spirit pervaded all his own domestic arrangements, so that the intensity of his affliction was ameliorated by as much comfort as satisfaction in the outward furniture of life can give to slender fortune.

The most important light, however, shed on Lamb's intellectual life by a knowledge of his true history, is that which elucidates the change from vivid religious impressions, manifested in his earlier letters, to an apparent indifference towards immortal interests and celestial relations, which he confesses in a letter to Mr. Walter Wilson. The truth is, not that he became an unbeliever, or even a sceptic, but that the peculiar disasters in which he was plunged, and the tendency of his nature to seek immediate solaces, induced an habitual reluctance to look boldly into futurity. That conjugal love, which anticipates with far-looking eye prolonged existence in posterity, was denied to his self-sacrifice; irksome labour wearied out the heart of his days; and over his small household, Madness, like Death in the vision of Milton, continually "shook its dart," and only, at the best, "delayed to strike." Not daring to look onward, even for a little month, he acquired the habitual sense of living entirely in the present; enjoying with tremulous zest the security of the moment, and making some genial, but sad, amends for the want of all the perspective of life, by cleaving, with fondness, to its nearest objects, and becoming attached to them, even when least interesting in themselves.[1]

[1] We should hardly be inclined to accept these refinings as an apology for such religious views as Lamb held. It will also be seen what an

This perpetual grasping at transient relief from the minute and vivid present, associated Lamb's affections intimately and closely with the small details of daily existence; these became to him the "jutting frieze" and "coigne of vantage" in which his home-bred fancy "made its bed and procreant cradle;" these became imbued with his thoughts, and echoed back to him old feelings and old loves, till his inmost soul shivered at the prospect of being finally wrenched from them. Enthralled thus in the prison of an earthly home, he became perplexed and bewildered at the idea of an existence which, though holier and happier, would doubtless be entirely different from that to which he was bound by so many delicate films of custom. "Ah!" he would say, "we shall have none of these little passages of this life hereafter—none of our little quarrels and makings-up—no questionings about sixpence at whist;" and, thus repelled, he clung more closely to "the bright minutes" which he strung "on the thread of keen domestic anguish!" It is this intense feeling of the "nice regards of flesh and blood;" this dwelling in petty felicities; which

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inconsistency there is in this theory; for Lamb is shown to be so captivated with the material delights of nature, as to be disinclined to accept anything beyond; and at the same time to be so beset by the tragic horror of his life, as to be indisposed to think of a future. Lamb himself, though he might throw out such speculations in an essay, would have resented being thus taken *au pied de la lettre*. What his religious opinions were, we shall not presume to decide; but his would be a poor wretched soul who would be indebted for them to the petty enjoyments or *désagrémens* of life.

"No; Lamb's scepticism has not come lightly, nor is he a sceptic. . . . I look upon Lamb as one hovering between earth and heaven; neither hoping much nor fearing anything."—*Coleridge* in *Allsop's Letters*, etc., p. 461.—F.

makes us, apart from religious fears, unwilling to die. Small associations make death terrible, because we know, that parting with this life, we part from their company; whereas great thoughts make death less fearful, because we feel that they will be our companions in all worlds, and link our future to our present being in all ages. Such thoughts assuredly were not dead in a heart like Lamb's; they were only veiled by the nearer presences of familiar objects, and sometimes, perhaps, bursting in upon him in all their majesty, produced those startling references to sacred things, in which, though not to be quoted with approval, there was no conscious profaneness, but rather a wayward, fitful, disturbed piety. If, indeed, when borne beyond the present, he sought to linger in the past; to detect among the dust and cobwebs of antiquity, beauty, which had lurked there from old time, rather than to "rest and expatiate in a life to come," no anti-christian sentiment spread its chillness over his spirit. The shrinking into mortal life was but the weakness of a nature which shed the sweetness of the religion of its youth through the sorrows and the snatches of enjoyment which crowded his after years, and only feebly perceived its final glories, which, we may humbly hope, its immortal part is now enjoying.

It is not possible for the subtlest characteristic power, even when animated by the warmest personal regard, to give to those who never had the privilege of his companionship an idea of what Lamb was. There was an apparent contradiction in him, which seemed an inconsistency between thoughts closely associated, and which was in reality nothing but the contradiction of his genius and his fortune, fantas-

tically exhibiting itself in different aspects, which close intimacy could alone appreciate. He would startle you with the finest perception of truth, separating, by a phrase, the real from a tissue of conventional falsehoods, and the next moment, by some whimsical invention, make you "doubt truth to be a liar." He would touch the inmost pulse of profound affection, and then break off in some jest, which would seem profane "to ears polite," but carry as profound a meaning to those who had the right key, as his most pathetic suggestions; and where he loved and doted most, he would vent the overflowing of his feelings in words that looked like rudeness. He touches on this strange resource of love in his "Farewell to Tobacco," in a passage which may explain some startling freedoms with those he himself loved most dearly.

—— "Irony all, and feign'd abuse,
Such as perplext lovers use,
At a need, when in despair,
To paint forth the fairest fair;
Or in part but to express
That exceeding comeliness
Which their fancies doth so strike,
They borrow language of dislike;
And, instead of 'Dearest Miss,'
Jewel, honey, sweetheart, bliss,
And those forms of old admiring,
Call her cockatrice and siren,
Basilisk, and all that's evil,
Witch, hyena, mermaid, devil,
Ethiop, wench, and blackamoor,
Monkey, ape, and twenty more;
Friendly traitress, loving foe,—
Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know

A contentment to express,
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot
Whether it be pain or not."

Thus, in the very excess of affection to his sister, whom he loved above all else on earth, he would sometimes address to her some words of seeming reproach, yet so tinged with a humorous irony that none but an entire stranger could mistake his drift. His anxiety for her health, even in his most convivial moments, was unceasing. If, in company, he perceived she looked languid, he would repeatedly ask her, "Mary, does your head ache?" "Don't you feel unwell?" and would be satisfied by none of her gentle assurances, that his fears were groundless. He was always afraid of her sensibilities being too deeply engaged, and if in her presence any painful accident or history was discussed, he would turn the conversation with some desperate joke. Miss Betham, the author of the "Lay of Marie," which Lamb esteemed one of the most graceful and truly feminine works in a literature rich in female genius, who has reminded me of the trait in some recollections of Lamb, with which she has furnished me, relates, that once when she was speaking to Miss Lamb of Charles, and in her earnestness Miss Lamb had laid her hand kindly on the eulogist's shoulder, he came up hastily and interrupted them, saying, "Come, come, we must not talk sentimentally," and took up the conversation in his gayest strain.

Many of Lamb's witty and curious sayings have been repeated since his death, which are worthy to be held in undying remembrance; but they give no idea of the general tenor of his conversation, which

was far more singular and delightful in the traits, which could never be recalled, than in the epigrammatic turns which it is possible to quote. It was fretted into perpetual eddies of verbal felicity and happy thought, with little tranquil intervals reflecting images of exceeding elegance and grace. He sometimes poured out puns in startling succession; sometimes curiously contrived a train of sentences to introduce the catastrophe of a pun, which, in that case, was often startling from its own demerit. At Mr. Cary's one day, he introduced and kept up an elaborate dissertation on the various uses and abuses of the word *nice;* and when its variations were exhausted, showed what he had been driving at by exclaiming, "Well! now we have held a Council of Nice." "A pun," said he in a letter to Coleridge, in which he eulogised the Odes and Addresses of his friends Hood and Reynolds, "is a thing of too much consequence to be thrown in as a make-weight. You shall read one of the Addresses twice over and miss the puns, and it shall be quite as good, or better, than when you discover them. A pun is a noble thing *per se.* O never bring it in as an accessory![1] A pun is a sole digest of reflection (vide my 'Aids' to that awaking from a savage state); it is entire; it fills the mind; it is as perfect as a sonnet; better. It limps ashamed in the train and retinue of humour. It knows it should have an establishment of its own. The one, for instance, I made the other day; I forget which it was." Indeed, Lamb's choicest puns and humorous expressions could not be recollected.

[1] He explained to his friend Crabb Robinson that "a pun was nothing without a ridiculous element."—F.

They were born of the evanescent feeling, and died with it; "one moment *bright*, then gone for ever." The shocks of pleasurable surprise were so rapid in succession, and the thoughts suggested so new, that one destroyed the other, and left only the sense of delight behind. Frequently as I had the happiness of seeing him during twenty years, I can add nothing from my own store of recollection to those which have been collected.[1]

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[1] Miss Beetham has kindly supplied the following examples of his conversation:—A Miss Pate (when he heard of her, he asked if she was any relation to Mr. John *Head*, of Ipswich) was at a party, and he said on hearing her name, "Miss Pate I hate." "You are the first person who ever told me so, however," said she. "Oh! I mean nothing by it. If it had been Miss Dove, I should have said Miss Dove I love, or Miss Pike I like." About this time I saw Mr. Hazlitt for the first time at their house, and was talking on metaphysical subjects with him. Mr. Lamb came up, but my companion was very eloquent, and I begged him not to interrupt us. He stood silent, and Mr. Dyer came to me. "I know," said he, "that Mr. Cristall is a very fine artist, but I should like to know in what his merit principally consists. Is it colouring, character, design, etc.? My eyes are so bad!" On which Mr. Lamb began rhyming,—

"Says Mr. Dyer to Mr. Dawe,
Pray how does Mr. Cristall draw?
Says Mr. Dawe to Mr. Dyer,
He draws as well as you'd desire."

A lady he was intimate with had dark eyes, and one evening people rather persecuted him to praise them. "You should now write a couplet in praise of her eyes." "Aye do, Mr. Lamb," said she, "make an epigram about my eyes." He looked at her,—

"Your eyes! your eyes!
Are both of a size!"

Which was praise, but the least that could be accorded. Mrs. S—— recommended *honey* to him as a good thing for the eyes, and said her daughter had received much benefit from it. "I knew," said he, "she had sweet eyes, but had no idea before how they became so." At

It cannot be denied or concealed that Lamb's excellences, moral and intellectual, were blended with a

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my house once a person said something about his grandmother. "Was she a tall woman?" said Mr. Lamb. "I don't know; no, why do you ask?" "Oh! mine was, she was a granny-dear." He asked an absent lady's name, who had rather sharp features. On hearing it was Elizabeth or something of the kind, he said, "I should have thought if it had been Mary, she might have been St. Mary Axe." Another who was very much marked with the small-pox, he said, looked as if the devil had ridden rough-shod over her face. I saw him talking to her afterwards with great apparent interest, and noticed it, saying, "I thought he had not liked her." His reply was, "I like her internals very well." When I knew him first, I happened to sit next him at dinner, and he was running on about some lady who had died of love for him, saying "he was very sorry," but we could not command such inclinations, making all the common-place stuff said on such occasions appear very ridiculous; his sister laughingly interrupting him now and then, by saying, "Why she's alive now!" "Why she's married, and has a large family," etc. He would not, however, allow it, and went on. With a very serious face, therefore, when he looked my way, I said, 'And did she really die?" With a look of indignant astonishment at my simplicity, he said, "And do you think I should?" Not being able to suppress a smile, he saw what I had been about, and without finishing his speech turned away his head. The way in which he would imitate a person who had been detected in some petty theft was inimitable. He began once saying he never had been in suspicious circumstances but once, and then he had his hand over a guinea that lay on a counter, but that he really did not know it was there, etc. My youngest sister, then a little girl, in her talk afterwards, seemed to think he must have known it. Mrs. H—— was sitting on a sofa one day, between Mr. Montague and Mr. Lamb. The latter spoke to her, but all her attention was given to the other party. At last they ceased talking, and turning round to Mr. Lamb, asked what it was he had been saying? He replied, "Ask Mr. Montague, for it went in at one ear and out at another." One day at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, I was sitting on a form, looking at the catalogue and answering some young people about me who had none, or spared themselves the trouble of consulting it. There was a large picture of Prospero and Miranda, and I had just said, "It is by *Shee*," when a voice near me said, "Would it not be more grammatical

single frailty; so intimately associating itself with all that was most charming in the one, and sweetest in

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to say *her?*" I looked, it was Mr. Lamb. He went with a party down to my brother Charles's ship, in which the officers gave a ball to their friends. My brother hired a vessel to take us down to it, and some one of the company asked its name. On hearing it was the Antelope, Mr. Lamb cried out, "Don't name it, I have such a respect for my aunt I cannot bear to think of her doing such a foolish action!" I once sat with Mr. Lamb in the pit of the theatre when Mrs. Siddons gave one of her last performances. We had two vulgar and conceited women behind us, who went on explaining and commenting to show their knowledge, in a most absurd manner. Mr. Lamb occasionally gave them a lift. When Malcolm came on in particular, he said, "He a king! Why, he is in petticoats!" One of them said to the other, "It's the dress of the country. Ignorant wretches!" I had, I believe, once led the discourse in company by telling a story of a bad Arabian poet who fell sick because he could get nobody to hear him recite; the physician grasped the cane and caned him. On this, Mr. Lamb declaimed a great deal on the absurdity of reading one's own works aloud; that people were always tired instead of being pleased with it; and that he made a poem the other day befitting the time (one of those of overwhelming darkness such as ours in London sometimes are) and though he had not yet had time to transcribe it and recollect it perfectly, he should never think of repeating it to other people. Everybody, of course, were entreating him to favour them by repeating it, assuring him they should like it very much; and *at length* he complied. "O my Gog! What a fog!" "A fine thing to make a fuss about," said Miss M——. "Why, I can make a second part extempore.—I cannot see to kill a flea." A lady who had been visiting in the neighbourhood of Ipswich, on her return could talk of nothing but the beauty of the country and the merits of the people. Mr. Lamb remarked that "she was Suffolk-ated." The following specimens of his conversation have been supplied by another friend. A widow friend of Lamb having opened a preparatory school for children at Camden Town, said to him, "I live so far from town I must have a sign, I think you call it, to show that I teach children. "Well," he replied, "you can have nothing better than '*The Murder of the Innocents.*'" A gentleman who had lived some years in China mentioned that a formidable enemy to the Chinese would arise one day in a warlike

the other, that, even if it were right to withdraw it wholly from notice, it would be impossible without it

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piratical nation on the borders of China—*the Ladrones*. In the course of the evening, the progress of musical science in China was spoken of, and the traveller, by way of illustrating his remarks, sang a Chinese love-song. Lamb listened very gravely to this dissonant performance, and at the end exclaimed, "*God prosper the Ladrones*." Coleridge one day said to him "Did you ever hear me *preach?*" "I never heard you do anything else," said Lamb. Seeing a little boy heavily laden with groceries toiling up Highgate Hill one hot summer's day, Lamb offered to assist him, took his load and carried it for him to the house where the child was to deliver it. On laying down his burden, Lamb requested the lady of the house to remonstrate with her grocer on the inhumanity of compelling a little boy to carry such a load. The lady bristled up, and sharply replied, "I have nothing to do with such matters." On which Lamb, altering his tone, irresistibly said, "I hope ma'am you'll give me a drop of beer."—*Talfourd*. This note was withdrawn from the later editions for the reason, "that so vapid would be the effect of these specimens of Lamb's humour when printed, compared to that which they produced when stammered out they gave the moment its victory." As the imagination may in part supply this accompaniment, it has been thought a pity to deprive the reader of these jests, which, though a little trivial, are characteristic in their way.

From those collected by Mr. Procter, I have selected a few of the best:—

I once said something in his presence, which I thought possessed smartness. He commended me with a stammer: "Very well, my dear boy, very well; Ben (taking a pinch of snuff), Ben Jonson has said worse things than that—and—and b—b— better." [This, with a small variation, is given in Mr. Thomas Moore's autobiography. I suppose I must have repeated it to him, and that he forgot the precise words.] The second son of George the Second, it was said, had a very cold and ungenial manner. Lamb stammered out in his defence that "this was very natural in the Duke of Cu-Cum-ber-land." "Charles," said Coleridge to Lamb, "I think you have heard me preach?" "I n—n—never heard you do anything else," replied Lamb. Mrs. K., after expressing her love for her young children, added, tenderly, "And how do *you* like babies, Mr. Lamb?" His answer, immediate,

to do justice to his virtues. The eagerness with which he would quaff exciting liquors, from an early period

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almost precipitate, was "Boi-boi-boiled, ma'am." Hood tempting Lamb to dine with him, said, "We have a hare." "And many friends?" inquired Lamb. Of a man too prodigal of lampoons and verbal jokes, Lamb said, threateningly, "I'll Lamp-pun him." On two Prussians of the same name being accused of the same crime, it was remarked as curious that they were not in any way related to each other. "A mistake," said he, "they are cozens german." An old lady, fond of her disputing minister, wearied Lamb by the length of her praises. I speak, because I *know* him well, said she. "Well, I don't," replied Lamb; "I don't, but d——n him, at a 'venture.'" The Scotch, whom he did not like, "ought," he said, "to have double punishment; and to have fire without brimstone." (Coleridge had a share in this well-known jest, having "somewhat licked it into shape," Lamb told Mr. Allsop.) When Godwin was expatiating on the benefit of unlimited freedom of thought, especially in matters of religion, Lamb, who did not like this, interrupted him by humming the little child's song of "Old father Longlegs won't say his prayers," adding, violently, "*Throw him downstairs!*" This, however, was a favourite jest of the late Archbishop Whately's. His replying to some one, who insisted very strenuously on some interesting circumstances being "a matter of fact," by saying that *he* was "a matter of lie" man. Charles hated noise and fuss and fine words, but never hated any person. Once when he had said, "I hate Z.," some one present remonstrated with him, "Why, you have never seen him." "No," replied Lamb, "certainly not; I never could hate any man that I have once seen." Being asked how he felt when amongst the lakes and mountains of Cumberland, he replied that he was obliged to think of the ham and beef shop near Saint Martin's Lane; this was in order to bring down his thoughts from their almost too painful elevation, to the sober regions of everyday life. He once silenced a solemn disputant, by asking him gravely— taking his pipe out of his mouth to put the question—"Did he *really* mean to contend that a thief was not a good man?" So, too, his remark on Rogers' odd speculation as to what a man would think of his own face were it on another body; a sort of horror seized him when he saw it reflected in the glass as he shaved. He wondered how any one could feel a friendship for a person with such a face. "Then I hope you have mercy on the barbers,"

of life, proved that to a physical peculiarity of constitution was to be ascribed, in the first instance, the

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said Lamb, "and always shave yourself." He was once asked how he knew his books one from the other, for hardly any were lettered: his answer was as characteristic as it was true: "How does a shepherd know his sheep?"

His puns on the Mantchou Tartars and Chinese Celtes (Man-chew and Sell-teas) are characteristic. His biographer, who had a certain solemnity, was once rather shocked at Lamb's declaring that he should like to know the witnesses in the Queen's trial, and to have supper with them. "You would not *sit* with them!" said Sir T. Talfourd, with horror. Lamb answered promptly, that "he would sit with anything but a hen or a tailor."

Not less pleasant were his jests of a practical kind. As when the poems of a gentleman whom he was to meet at dinner were submitted to him, he learned a few verses by heart, and confounded the author by quoting them as "some little verses he wrote when he was young." Presently he gave "Of man's first disobedience," which brought the gentleman to his feet in a fury, saying that he had sat by and allowed "his own little verses to be claimed; but when it came to Milton," etc. So, too, when he took a house, his placing the board with "To Let" round his dog's neck, and sending him to the agent. So when the same dog set off to chase a flock, his reply to the indignant shepherd's expostulation was, "Hunt lambs, sir! Why, he never hunted *me*."

Mr. Crabb Robinson also supplies a few of his jests:—

When Dignum and Mrs. Bland, two stout performers, came on the stage, he exclaimed, "And lo! two puddings smoked upon the boards!" The divisions where the clerks of the India House sat used to be known as "Compounds." Lamb, on being asked who these clerks were, replied, "A collection of simples." More amusing was his reply to his friend Hume, who said in presence of his numerous children, that "one fool made many." "Mr. H., you have a fine family I see." Some one said, apropos of Johnson's remark on punsters, that "they had no pockets to pick;" on which Lamb said, "No; that they carried a ridicule." Shakespeare's anachronism was mentioned, in making Hector speak of Aristotle; "That," said Lamb, "is what Johnson means: 'And panting Time toils after him in vain.'"

From Mr. Allsop's pleasant volume I take the following:—

At Billingsgate, Lamb witnessed a quarrel between two fish women,

strength of the temptation with which he was assailed. This kind of corporeal need; the struggles of deep thought to overcome the bashfulness and the impediment of speech which obstructed its utterance; the dull, heavy, irksome labours which hung heavy on his mornings, and dried up his spirits; and still more, the sorrows which had environed him, and which prompted him to snatch a fearful joy; and the unbounded craving after sympathy with human feelings, conspired to disarm his power of resisting when the means of indulgence were actually before him. Great exaggerations have been prevalent on this subject, countenanced, no doubt, by the "Confessions" which, in the prodigality of his kindness, he contributed to his friend's collection of essays and authorities against the use of spirituous liquors; for, although he had rarely the power to overcome the temptation when presented, he made heroic sacrifices in flight. His final abandonment of tobacco, after many ineffectual attempts, was one of these—a princely sacrifice. He had loved smoking, "not wisely, but too well," for he had been content to use the coarsest varieties of the "great plant." When Dr. Parr,—who took only the finest tobacco, used to half fill his pipe with salt, and smoked with a philosophic calmness,—saw Lamb smoking the strongest preparation of the weed, puffing out smoke like some furious Enchanter, he gently laid down his pipe, and asked him, how he had acquired

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one of whom, snatching up a knife, cut off the other's thumb. "Ha!" said he, looking about him as if he only just recognised the place, "this is Fairlop Fair." Martin Burney, earnestly explaining the three kinds of acid, was stopped by Lamb. "The best of all kinds of acids, however, as, you know, Martin, is uity—assiduity."—F.

his power of smoking at such a rate? Lamb replied, "I toiled after it, sir, as some men toil after virtue." Partly to shun the temptations of society, and partly to preserve his sister's health, he fled from London, where his pleasures and his heart were, and buried himself in the solitude of the country, to him always dismal. He would even deny himself the gratification of meeting Wordsworth or Southey, or use it very sparingly during their visits to London, in order that the accompaniments of the table might not entice him to excess. And if sometimes, after miles of solitary communing with his own sad thoughts, the village inn did invite him to quaff a glass of sparkling ale; and if when his retreat was lighted up with the presence of some old friend, he was unable to refrain from the small portion which was too much for his feeble frame, let not the stout-limbed and the happy exult over the consequence! Drinking with him, except so far as it cooled a feverish thirst, was not a sensual, but an intellectual pleasure; it lighted up his fading fancy, enriched his humour, and impelled the struggling thought or beautiful image into day; and perhaps by requiring for him some portion of that allowance which he extended to all human frailties, endeared him the more to those who so often received, and were delighted to bestow it.[1]

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[1] This rather fine-drawn distinction has been well disposed of by a writer in the *Edinburgh Review*. "Drinking," he says, "is not to be called an intellectual pleasure; because, when a man has once contracted the habit of excessive indulgence in the use of ardent spirits, one of its most miserable consequences is a slavish dependence on them. . . . The issue we all know: crowded jails; Sheridan a by-word, instead of perhaps prime minister." Indeed, Sir T. Talfourd, in his natural warmth for his friend's reputation, has softened Lamb's subjection to

Lamb's indulgence to the failings of others could could hardly indeed be termed allowance; the name

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this "frailty." Mr. Procter has tried to vindicate him even more thoroughly. It is a delicate matter, and there may seem something ungracious in attempting to deepen such shadows; but unhappily there is a remarkable concurrence of testimony as to this weakness, which appears to have been deplored by himself and by all his friends, though they were ever ready to offer indulgent excuses. Talfourd, Daniel, Patmore, Miss Isola, and even Mary Lamb, furnish evidence hard to contend against.

Lamb himself, in 1805, bewails his "cursed drinking," which he says for five years has been embittering his sister's life. In 1830, Miss Isola was appealing to him: "Now pray don't *drink;* do check yourself after dinner, for my sake, when we get home to Enfield, you shall drink as much as ever you please." Later he is found "turning over a new leaf," having succeeded in getting home "half as sober as a judge." "I have left off spirits," he writes in 1813 . . . "with a moral certainty of its lasting." "Alas!" adds Talfourd in a note, "for moral certainty in this moral but mortal world! Lamb's resolution to leave off spirituous liquours was a brave one; but he strengthened and rewarded it by such copious libations of porter, that his sister, for whose sake mainly he attempted the sacrifice, entreated him to "live like himself," and in a few weeks after this assurance he obeyed her.

An indulgence thus sustained, and spread over a period of more than twenty years, can hardly be softened away into complaisance with the humours of society and good-fellowship. Thus, behind the inviting pictures of the "Lamb Suppers," which have been compared to the meetings of Holland House, was always hovering this spectre.

But the following passage from a letter of Mary Lamb's, dated Nov 30th, 1810, is more significant.

"Charles was drunk last night, and drunk the night before; which night before was at Godwin's, where we went at a short summons from Mr. G., to play a solitary rubber. We finished there at twelve o'clock (Charles and Liston brim-full of gin & water & snuff): after which, Henry Robinson spent a long evening by our fireside at home; and there was much gin & water drunk, albeit only one of the party partook of it. And H. R. professed himself highly indebted to Charles for the useful information he gave him on sundry matters of taste and imagination, even after Charles could not speak plain for tipsiness.

of charity is too cold to suit it. He did not merely love his friends in spite of their errors, but he loved them errors and all; so near to him was everything human. He numbered among his associates, men of all varieties of opinion—philosophical, religious, and political—and found something to like, not only in the men themselves, but in themselves as associated with their theories and their schemes. In the high and calm, but devious speculations of Godwin; in the fierce hatreds of Hazlitt; in the gentle and glorious mysticism of Coleridge; in the sturdy opposition of Thelwall to the Government; in Leigh Hunt's softened and fancy-streaked patriotism; in the gallant Toryism of Stoddart; he found traits which made the individuals more dear to him. When Leigh Hunt was imprisoned in Cold Bath Fields for a libel, Lamb was one of his most constant visitors—and when Thelwall was striving to bring the "Champion" into notice, Lamb was ready to assist him with his pen, and to fancy himself, for the time, a Jacobin. In this large intellectual tolerance, he resembled Professor Wilson, who, notwithstanding his own decided opi-

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But still he swallowed the flattery and the spirits as savourily as Robinson did his cold water. . . .

"Last night was to be a night, but it was not. There was a certain son of one of Martin's employers, one young Mr. Blake; to do whom honour, Mrs. Burney brought forth, first rum, then a single bottle of champaine, long kept in her secret hoard; then two bottles of her best currant wine, which she keeps for Mrs. Rickman, came out; & Charles partook liberally of all these beverages. . . . The alternating Wednesdays will drop off one day in the week from your jolly days, and I do not know how we shall make it up to you; but I will contrive the best I can. Phillips comes again pretty regularly, to the great joy of Mrs. Reynolds."—*Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, p. 83.—F.

nions, has a compass of mind large enough to embrace all others which have noble alliances within its range.[1] But not only to opposite opinions, and devious habits of thought, was Lamb indulgent; he discovered "the soul of goodness in things evil" so vividly, that the surrounding evil disappeared from his mental vision. Nothing—no discovery of error or of crime—could divorce his sympathy from a man who had once engaged it. He saw in the spendthrift, the outcast, only the innocent companion of his school-days or the joyous associate of his convivial hours, and he did not even make penitence or reform a condition of his regard. Perhaps he had less sympathy with philanthropic schemers for the improvement of the world than with any other class of men; but of these he numbered two of the greatest, Clarkson the destroyer of the slave-trade, and Basil Montague the constant opponent of the judicial infliction of death; and the labours of neither have been in vain!

To those who were not intimately acquainted with Lamb, the strong disinclination to contemplate another state of being, which he sometimes expressed in his serious conversation, and which he has solemnly confessed in his "New Year's Eve," might cast a doubt on feelings which were essentially pious. The same peculiarity of nature which attached him to the

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[1] Lamb only once met that remarkable person,—who has probably more points of resemblance to him than any other living poet,—and was quite charmed with him. They walked out from Enfield together, and strolled happily a long summer's day, not omitting, however, a call for a refreshing draught. Lamb called for a pot of ale or porter—half of which would have been his own usual allowance; and was delighted to hear the Professor, on the appearance of the foaming tankard, say reproachfully to the waiter, "And one for me!"

narrow and crowded streets, in preference to the mountain and the glen—which made him loth to quit even painful circumstances and unpleasant or ill-timed company; the desire to seize and grasp all that was nearest, bound him to earth, and prompted his sympathies to revolve within a narrow circle. Yet in that very power of adhesion to outward things, might be discerned the strength of a spirit destined to live beyond them. Within the contracted sphere of his habits and desires, he detected the subtlest essences of Christian kindliness, shed over it a light from heaven, and peopled it with divine fancies and

> "Thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality."

Although he numbered among his associates free-thinkers and sceptics, he had a great dislike to any profane handling of sacred subjects, and always discouraged polemical discussion. One evening, when Irving and Coleridge were in company, and a young gentleman had spoken slightingly of religion, Lamb remained silent; but when the party broke up, he said to the youth who had thus annoyed his guests, "Pray, did you come here in a hat, sir, or in a turban?"

The range of Lamb's reading was varied, but yet peculiar. He rejoiced in all old English authors, but cared little for the moderns, except one or two; and those whom he loved as authors because they were his friends. Attached always to things of flesh and blood rather than to "the bare earth and mountains bare, and grass in the green field," he chiefly loved the great dramatists, whose beauties he supported, and sometimes heightened, in his suggestive criticisms. While he enjoyed Wordsworth's poetry, especially "The Excursion," with a love which grew

upon him from his youth, he would repeat some of Pope's divine compliments, or Dryden's lines, weighty with sterling sense or tremendous force of satire, with eyes trembling into tears. The comedies of Wycherley, and Congreve, and Farquhar, were not to him gross and sensual, but airy, delicate creations, framed out of coarse materials it might be, but evaporating in wit and grace, harmless effusions of the intellect and the fancy. The ponderous dulness of old controversialists, the dead weight of volumes of once fierce dispute, of which time had exhausted the venom, did not appal him. He liked the massive reading of the old Quaker records, the huge density of old schoolmen, better than the flippancy of modern criticism. If you spoke of Lord Byron, he would turn the subject by quoting the lines descriptive of his namesake in *Love's Labour Lost*—"Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Byron," etc.—for he could find nothing to revere or love in the poetry of that extraordinary but most uncomfortable poet; except the apostrophe to Parnassus, in which he exults in the sight of the real mountain instead of the mere poetic image. All the Laras, and Giaours, and Childe Harolds, were to him but "unreal mockeries,"—the phantasms of a feverish dream,—forms which did not appeal to the sympathies of mankind, and never can find root among them. Shelley's poetry, too, was icy cold to him; except one or two of the minor poems, in which he could not help admiring the exquisite beauty of the expression; and the "Cenci," in which, notwithstanding the painful nature of the subject, there is a warmth and passion, and a correspondent simplicity of diction, which prove how mighty a poet the author would have become had he lived long enough for his feelings to have free dis-

course with his creative power. Responding only to the touch of human affection, he could not bear poetry which, instead of making the whole world kin, renders our own passions and frailties and virtues strange to us; presents them at a distance in splendid masquerade; exalts them into new and unauthorised mythology, and crystallises all our freshest loves and mantling joys into clusters of radiant fancies. He made some amends for his indifference to Shelley, by his admiration of Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein," which he thought the most extraordinary realization of the idea of a being out of nature which had ever been effected. For the Scotch novels he cared very little, not caring to be puzzled with new plots, and preferring to read Fielding, and Smollett, and Richardson, whose stories were familiar, over and over again, to being worried with the task of threading the maze of fresh adventure. But the good-naturedness of Sir Walter to all his contemporaries won his admiration, and he heartily rejoiced in the greatness of his fame, and the rich rewards showered upon him, and desired they might accumulate for the glory of literature and the triumph of kindness. He was never introduced to Sir Walter; but he used to speak with gratitude and pleasure of the circumstances under which he saw him once in Fleet Street. A man, in the dress of a mechanic, stopped him just at Inner Temple Gate, and said, touching his hat, "I beg your pardon, sir, but perhaps you would like to see Sir Walter Scott; that is he just crossing the road;" and Lamb stammered out his hearty thanks to his truly humane informer.[1]

[1] "His tastes, in many respects, were most singular. He preferred Wardour Street and Seven Dials to fields that were Elysian. The disappearance of the old clock from St. Dunstan's Church drew tears

Of his own writings it is now superfluous to speak; for, after having encountered long derision and neglect, they have taken their place among the classics of his language. They stand alone, at once singular and delightful. They are all carefully elaborated; yet never were works written in a higher defiance to the

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from him; nor could he ever pass without emotion the place where Exeter Change once stood. The removal had spoiled a reality in Gay. The passer-by, he said, no longer saw 'the combs dangle in his face.' This almost broke his heart. He had no taste for flowers or green fields; he preferred the high road. The Garden of Eden, he used to say, must have been a dull place. He had a strong aversion to roast beef and to fowls, and to any wines but port or sherry. Tripe and cow-heel were to him delicacies—rare dainties! . . .

"All his books were without portraits; nor did he ever preserve, with two exceptions, a single letter. He had a humorous method of testing the friendship of his visitors; it was, whether in their walks they would taste the tap of mine host at the Horse Shoe, or at the Rose and Crown, or at the Rising Sun! But a member of the Temperance Society, on these occasions, could not have been more abstemious. A single glass would suffice. We have seen ladies enter with him—the fastidious Barbara S.; and great poets—the author of the "Excursion" himself! He was no politician, though in his youth he once assisted to draw through the streets Charles James Fox! Nor was he a man of business. He could not pack up a trunk, nor tie up a parcel. Yet he was methodical, punctual in his appointments, and an excellent paymaster. A debt haunted him! He could not live in another person's books. He wished to leave a friend a small sum of money; but 'to have done with the thing,' as he said, gave it him beforehand. If an acquaintance dropped in of an evening before supper, he would instantly, without saying a word, put on his hat and go and order an extra supply of porter. He has done this for us a hundred times! Relics and keepsakes had no charm for him. A traveller once brought him some acorns from an ilex that grew over the tomb of Virgil. He threw them at the hackney-coachmen as they passed by his window! And there is a story, that he once sat to an artist of his acquaintance for a whole series of the British Admirals; but for what publication we never heard."—E. Moxon, in the *Athenæum*.—F.

conventional pomp of style. A sly hit, a happy pun, a humorous combination, lets the light into the intricacies of the subject, and supplies the place of ponderous sentences. As his serious conversation was his best, so his serious writing is far preferable to his fantastical humours,—cheering as they are, and suggestive ever as they are of high and invigorating thoughts. Seeking his materials, for the most part, in the common paths of life,—often in the humblest,—he gives an importance to everything, and sheds a grace over all. The spirit of gentility seems to breathe around all his persons; he detects the venerable and the excellent in the narrowest circumstances and humblest conditions with the same subtilty which reveals the hidden soul of the greatest works of genius. In all things he is most human. Of all modern writers, his works are most immediately directed to give us heart-ease and to make us happy.[1]

Among the felicities of Lamb's chequered life, that which he esteemed most, was his intimate friendship with some of the greatest of our poets,—Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth; the last and greatest of whom has paid a tribute to his memory, which may fitly close this memoir.

> "To a good Man of most dear memory
> This Stone is sacred. Here he lies apart
> From the great city where he first drew breath,
> Was reared and taught; and humbly earned his bread,

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[1] Goethe, when Lamb's writings were spoken of before him, asked if he was the author of a pretty sonnet on his own name; a compliment with which Lamb—though he affected to depreciate Goethe—was flattered. Tieck declared that the notes to the "Specimens" were written out of his very heart.—F.

To the strict labours of the merchant's desk
By duty chained. Not seldom did those tasks
Tease, and the thought of time so spent depress
His spirit, but the recompense was high;
Firm Independence, Bounty's rightful sire;
Affections, warm as sunshine, free as air;
And when the precious hours of leisure came,
Knowledge and wisdom, gained from converse sweet
With books, or while he ranged the crowded streets
With a keen eye, and overflowing heart:
So genius triumphed over seeming wrong,
And poured out truth in works by thoughtful love
Inspired—works potent over smiles and tears.
And as round mountain-tops the lightning plays,
Thus innocently sported, breaking forth
As from a cloud of some grave sympathy,
Humour and wild instinctive wit, and all
The vivid flashes of his spoken words.
From the most gentle creature nursed in fields
Had been derived the name he bore—a name,
Wherever Christian altars have been raised,
Hallowed to meekness and to innocence;
And if in him meekness at times gave way,
Provoked out of herself by troubles strange,
Many and strange, that hung about his life;
Still, at the centre of his being, lodged
A soul by resignation sanctified:
And if too often, self-reproached, he felt
That innocence belongs not to our kind,
A power that never ceased to abide in him,
Charity, 'mid the multitude of sins
That she can cover, left not his exposed
To an unforgiving judgment from just Heaven.
O, he was good, if e'er a good man lived!

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From a reflecting mind and sorrowing heart
Those simple lines flowed with an earnest wish,
Though but a doubting hope, that he might serve
Fitly to guard the precious dust of him
Whose virtues called them forth. That aim is missed;
For much that truth most urgently required

Had from a faltering pen been asked in vain:
Yet, haply, on the printed page received,
The imperfect record, there, may stand unblamed
As long as verse of mine shall breathe the air
Of memory, or see the light of love.

Thou wert a scorner of the fields, my Friend,
But more in show than truth; and from the fields,
And from the mountains, to thy rural grave
Transported, my soothed spirit hovers o'er
Its green untrodden turf, and blowing flowers;
And taking up a voice shall speak (though still
Awed by the theme's peculiar sanctity,
Which words less free presumed not even to touch)
Of that fraternal love, whose heaven-lit lamp
From infancy, through manhood, to the last
Of threescore years, and to thy latest hour,
Burnt on with ever-strengthening light, enshrined
Within thy bosom.

'Wonderful' hath been
The love established between man and man,
'Passing the love of women;' and between
Man and his help-mate in fast wedlock joined
Through God, is raised a spirit and soul of love
Without whose blissful influence Paradise
Had been no Paradise; and earth were now
A waste where creatures bearing human form,
Direst of savage beasts, would roam in fear,
Joyless and comfortless. Our days glide on;
And let him grieve who cannot choose but grieve
That he hath been an Elm without his Vine,
And her bright flower of clustering charities,
That, round his trunk and branches, might have clung
Enchanting and adorning. Unto thee,
Not so enriched, not so adorned, to thee
Was given (say rather thou of later birth
Wert given to her) a Sister—'tis a word
Timidly uttered, for she *lives*, the meek,
The self-restraining, and the ever-kind;
In whom thy reason and intelligent heart

Found—for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
All softening, humanising, hallowing powers,
Whether withheld, or for her sake unsought—
More than sufficient recompense!

Her love
(What weakness prompts the voice to tell it here?)
Was as the love of mothers; and when years,
Lifted the boy to man's estate, had called
The long-protected to assume the part
Of a protector, the filial tie
Was undissolved; and in or out of sight,
Remained imperishably interwoven
With life itself. Thus 'mid a shifting world,
Did they together testify of time
And seasons' difference—a double tree
With two collateral stems sprung from one root;
Such were they—and such through life they *might* have been
In union, in partition only such;
Otherwise wrought the will of the Most High;
Yet, through all visitations and all trials,
Still they were faithful; like two vessels launched
From the same beach one ocean to explore
With mutual help, and sailing—to their league
True, as inexorable winds, or bars
Floating or fixed of polar ice, allow.

But turn we rather, let my spirit turn
With thine, O silent and invisible Friend!
To those dear intervals, nor rare nor brief,
When reunited, and by choice withdrawn
From miscellaneous converse ye were taught
That the remembrance of forgone distress,
And the worse fear of future ill (which oft
Doth hang around it, as a sickly child
Upon its mother) may be both alike
Disarmed of power to unsettle present good
So prized, and things inward and outward held
In such an even balance, that the heart
Acknowledges God's grace, his mercy feels,
And in its depth of gratitude is still.

O gift divine of quiet sequestration!
The hermit, exercised in prayer and praise,
And feeding daily on the hope of heaven,
Is happy in his vow, and fondly cleaves
To life-long singleness; but happier far
Was to your souls, and, to the thoughts of others,
A thousand times more beautiful appeared,
Your *dual* loneliness. The sacred tie
Is broken; yet why grieve? for Time but holds
His moiety in trust, till Joy shall lead
To the blest world where parting is unknown." [1]

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[1] Compare, also, Leigh Hunt's "Familiar Epistle" to Charles Lamb:—

O thou, whom old Homer would call, were he living,
Home-lover, thought-feeder, abundant joke-giving,
Whose charity springs from deep knowledge, nor swerves
Into mere self-reflections, or scornful reserves,—
In short, who wert made for two centuries ago,
When Shakespeare drew men, and to write was to know,—

You'll guess why I can't see the snow-covered streets
Without thinking of you and your visiting feats,
When you call to remembrance how you and one more,
When I wanted it most, used to knock at my door;
For, when the sad winds told us rain would come down,
Or snow upon snow fairly clogged up the town,
And dun, yellow fogs brooded over its white,
So that scarcely a being was seen towards night,
Then—then said the lady yclept near and dear:
"Now, mind what I tell you—the Lambs will be here."
So I poked up the flame, and she got out the tea,
And down we both sat, as prepared as could be;
And there, sure as fate, came the knock of you two,
Then the lanthorn, the laugh, and the "Well, how d'ye do?"

Then your palm tow'rds the fire, and your face turned to me,
And shawls and great-coats being where they should be,
And due "never saws" being paid to the weather,
We cherished our knees, and sat sipping together;

And, leaving the world to the fogs and the fighters,
Discussed the pretensions of all sorts of writers:
Of Shakespeare's coevals, all spirits divine;
Of Chapman, whose Homer's a fine rough old wine;
Of Marvel, wit, patriot, poet, who knew
How to give, both at once, Charles and Cromwell their due;
Of Spenser, who wraps you, wherever you are,
In a bow'r of seclusion beneath a sweet star;
Of Richardson, too, who afflicts us so long,
We begin to suspect him of nerves over-strong;
In short, of all those who give full-measured page—
Not forgetting Sir Thanas, my ancestor sage,
Who delighted (so happy were all his digestions)
In puzzling his head with impossible questions.

But *now*, Charles, you never (so blissful you deem me)
Come lounging, with twirl of umbrella, to see me.
In vain have we hoped to be set at our ease
By the rains—which, you know, used to bring Lamb and pease—
In vain we look out, like the children in Thomson,
And say, in our innocence, "Surely he'll come soon!"

The reader may now turn to Mr. Forster's Memoir, written a few days after Lamb's death, when grief and recollection were alike fresh. A few passages, which Sir T. Talfourd seems to have adopted, have been omitted.

"Biographical Memoir of Charles Lamb.

"Charles Lamb was born in the Temple, in February, 1775. 'Tis my poor birthday,' says a letter of his we have lying before us, dated the 11th of February. The day will be rich hereafter to the lovers of wit and true genius. The place of his birth had greatly to do with his personal tastes in after life. Every one who has read "John Woodvil" cannot fail to have been struck (as in that loveliest of passages on the 'sports of the forest') with its exquisite sense of rural beauty and imagery. But Mr. Lamb's affection nevertheless turned downwards. Born under the shadow of St. Dunstan's steeple, he retained his love for it, and for the neighbouring town streets, to the last; and to the last he loved the very smoke of London, because, as he said, it had been the

medium most familiar to his vision. Anything, in truth, once felt, he never wished to change. When he made any alteration in his lodgings, the thing sadly discomposed him. His household gods, as he would say, planted a terrible fixed foot.

"This early habit, however, and this hatred of change, were not the only sources of his attachment to London, and to London streets. A sort of melancholy was often the source of Lamb's humour—a melancholy which, indeed, almost insensibly dashed his merriest writings—which used to throw out into still more delicate relief the subtleties of his wit and fancy, and which made his very jests to "scald like tears." In London there was some remedy for this, when it threatened to overmaster him. 'Often,' he said, 'when I have felt a weariness or distaste at home, have I rushed out into her crowded Strand, and fed my humour, till tears have wetted my cheek for unutterable sympathies with the multitudinous moving picture, which she never fails to present at all hours, like the scenes of a shifting pantomime.' This is a great and wise example for such as may be similarly afflicted.

"Mr. Lamb's earliest associates in London were Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Charles Lloyd, and others, who 'called Admiral Burney friend.' They used to assemble weekly at Burney's house, at the Queen's Gate, to chat and play whist; or they would meet to discuss supper, and the hopes of the world, at the Old Salutation Tavern. This was the '* * * * * * Inn,' to which Mr. Lamb makes so affectionate a reference in the dedication of his poems to Coleridge; this was the immortal tavern, and these were the 'old suppers in delightful years,' where he used to say Coleridge first kindled in him, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness;—quoting, with true enthusiasm—

'What words have I heard
Spoke at the Mermaid!'

Life was then, indeed, fresh to them all, and topics exhaustless; but yet there was one preferred before all others, because it included all. Mr. Lamb was at this period, indeed from the time he quitted Christ's Hospital to within nine years of his death, a clerk in the India House. It is scarcely pleasant to think of his constant labours there, when we think of the legacy of nobler writing of which they may have robbed the world. What have we to do now with all his—

'drops of labour spilt
On those huge and figured pages,
Which will sleep unclasp'd for ages,

Little knowing who did wield,
The quill that traversed their white field?'

Lines from a 'Poetical Epistle,' by Mr. Procter, who repaid Lamb's affection, felt towards him to the last, in a manner worthy of the hearts and the genius of both.

"But we have the better reason, perhaps, to be grateful for what has nevertheless been bequeathed to us. The genius of Mr. Lamb, as, developed in his various writings, takes rank with the most original of the age. As a critic, he stands *facile princeps*, in all the subjects he handled. Search English literature through, from its first beginnings till now, and you will find none like him. There is not a criticism he ever wrote that does not directly tell you a number of things you had no previous notion of. In criticism he was indeed, in all senses of the word, 'a discoverer—like Vasco Nunez or Magellan.' In that very domain of literature with which you fancied yourself most variously and closely acquainted, he would show you 'fresh fields and pastures new,' and these the most fruitful and delightful. For the riches he discovered were richer that they had lain so deep—the more valuable were they, when found, that they had eluded the search of ordinary men.

"As an Essayist, Charles Lamb will be remembered, in years to come, with Rabelais and Montaigne, with Sir Thomas Browne, with Steele, and with Addison. He unites many of the finest characteristics of these several writers. He has wisdom and wit of the highest order, exquisite humour, a genuine and cordial vein of pleasantry, and the most heart-touching pathos. In the largest acceptation of the word he is a humanist. No one of the great family of authors past and present has shown in matters the most important or the most trivial so delicate and extreme a sense of all that is human. It is the prevalence of this characteristic in his writings which has subjected him to occasional charges of want of imagination. This, however, is but half-criticism; for the matter of reproach may in fact be said to be his triumph. It was with a deep relish of Mr. Lamb's faculty that a friend of his once said, 'he makes the majesties of imagination seem familiar.' It is precisely thus with his own imagination. It eludes the observation of the ordinary reader in the very modesty of its truth, in its social and familiar air. His fancy as an Essayist is distinguished by singular delicacy and tenderness; and even his conceits, when they occur, will generally be found to be, as those of his favourite Fuller often are, steeped in human feeling and passion. The fondness he entertained for Fuller, for the author of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' and for other

writers of that class, was pure matter of temperament. His thoughts were always his own. Even when his words seem cast in the very mould of theirs, the perfect originality of his thinking is felt and acknowledged—we may add, in its superior wisdom, manliness, and unaffected sweetness. Every sentence in those Essays may be proved to be crammed full of thinking. The two volumes which contain them will be multiplied, we have no doubt, in the course of a few years, into as many hundred; for they contain a stock of matter which must be ever suggestive to more active minds, and will surely revisit the world in new shapes—an everlasting succession and variety of ideas. The past to him was not mere dry antiquity; it involved a most extensive and touching association of feelings and thoughts, reminding him of what we have been and may be, and seeming to afford a surer ground for resting on than the things which are here to-day and may be gone to-morrow. We know of no inquisition more curious, and no speculation more lofty, than may be found in the Essays of Charles Lamb. We know no place where conventional absurdities receive so little quarter; where stale evasions are so plainly exposed; where the barriers between names and things are at times so thoroughly flung down. And how could it indeed be otherwise? For it is truth which plays upon his writings like a genial and divine atmosphere. No need for them to prove what they would be at by any formal or logical analysis; no need for him to tell the world that this institution is wrong and that doctrine right; the world may gather from those writings their surest guide to judgment in these and all other cases—a general and honest appreciation of the humane and true.

"As a Poet, Mr. Lamb has left several things 'the world will not willingly let die.' Shall we not name first his prose tale of 'Rosamund Gray,' which we have read a dozen times, as well as we could for our tears? We will match this tale against the world for unequalled delicacy and pathos. Shall we not treasure up too in our heart of hearts the memory of 'John Woodvil,' of him who offended and was forgiven—and of the angelic, ever-honoured Margaret, whom miseries could never alienate, nor change of fortune shake, whom her lover's injuries 'and slights (the worst of injuries)' could not, in his days of shame, when all the world forsook him, make *her* forsake, or cease to cling with love stronger than death to her dear heart's lord, life's pride, soul-honoured John! These are destined to be everlasting creatures—once known, taken to the memory for ever. How exquisite is the tenderness with which, when questioned on John's neglect, she only turns aside for a moment with a tear, and afterwards

resumes her conversation cheerfully. How sublime is the reach of pathos with which Sir Walter Woodvil, betrayed to his enemies by his son, breaks his heart without uttering a single word. When the charge of an imitation of the elder poets is brought against Charles Lamb, it is generally brought in ignorance. His style, it is true, smacks to us of the antique; tasting with a genuine Beaumont and Fletcher flavour; but this was because his way of thinking was like theirs; there is no imitation in it, setting aside the occasional indulgence of his love for them, which we all feel to be delightful. We could fancy their loving *him* just in the same way, because he lived in precisely that world of thought which was chiefly theirs, and which changes not with the alterations of age or style, but is everlasting, and changes never. Mr. Hazlitt tells a story of a rural description out of 'John Woodvil,' quoted anonymously in a modern book, meeting the eye of Mr. Godwin, who was so struck with the beauty of the passage, and with a consciousness of having seen it before, that he was uneasy till he could recollect where, and after hunting in vain for it in Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other not unlikely places, sent to Mr. Lamb to know if he could help him to the author! We should have recommended him in his search to look out for a higher sort of Heywood, some one between Heywood and Fletcher. When the day of popularity for these great writers shall come round again, Mr. Lamb's poetry will be popular too. His minor pieces are full of delicacy and wit, and read occasionally like one of his Essays.

"But it was not as a Critic, it was not as an Essayist, it was not as a poet, fervently as we entertained for him in these characters the admiration we have poorly endeavoured to express—it is not in any of these that we felt towards him the strongest feeling of devotion—we loved THE MAN. He was the most entirely delightful person we have ever known. He had no affectation, no assumption, no fuss, no cant, nothing to make him otherwise than delightful. His very foibles, as is remarked in a recent publication, were for the most part so small, and were engrafted so curiously upon a strong original mind, that we would scarcely have desired them away. They were a sort of fret-work, which let in light, and showed the form and order of his character. They had their origin in weakness of system chiefly; and that which we have heard by the unthinking condemned as wilful, in terms of severe reproach, was in the first instance nothing but a forced resort to aid that might serve to raise his spirits in society to what was no more than the ordinary pitch of all around him without it. Never could the natural temperament against which Mr. Lamb had to

struggle be forgotten by those who are left to speak of his habits and character. Of all the great and peculiar sorrows he was fated to experience through life (and there were many to which even an allusion may not here be made, and for which nearly his whole existence was offered as a willing and devoted sacrifice), the sorrows with which he was born were the greatest of all. His friends, whom he delighted by his wit, and enriched by his more serious talk, never knew the whole price he paid for those hours of social conversation. 'Reader,' he once said in a paper which, with some dash of fiction, conveyed his saddest personal experience, 'Reader, if you are gifted with nerves like mine, aspire to any character but that of a wit. When you find a tickling relish upon your tongue disposing you to that sort of conversation, especially if you find a preternatural flow of ideas setting in upon you at the sight of a bottle and fresh glasses, avoid giving way to it as you would fly your greatest destruction. If you cannot crush the power of fancy, or that within you which you mistake for such, divert it—give it some other play. Write an essay,—pen a character or description; —*but not as I do now—with tears trickling down your cheeks.*" We retire with reverence before the trials of such a spirit as this.

"No one in a conversation said such startling things as Lamb. No one was so witty or so sensible. No man ever had him at a disadvantage, except the man who did not understand him. He had a severe impediment in his speech, but this gave even an additional piquancy to the deep and eloquent things he said. After the stammering and hesitation, a half sentence would burst forth at the close, and set everybody laughing or thinking. And they would laugh at it, and think about it the next day, and the day after that. 'Lamb proves a truth,' said Hazlitt, 'in a play upon words." 'He was of the genuine line of Yorick," says the delightful writer of the *London Journal.* He was indeed;—or still more of the family of that ever-faithful and devoted 'fool' in 'Lear,' with his sayings of wisdom and snatches of old songs—'Young Lubin was a shepherd boy.' Who that was admitted to the intimacy of his acquaintance does not remember that and many others, and feel his heart sink with grief at our recent loss, though to rise again with pride in the consciousness of having been once admitted to such a friendship? We needed not to have made the restriction. Every one who knew him knew him intimately. He had no concealment, for he had nothing to conceal. He had the faculty,—as was remarked of him in the *Times* newspaper, by an old friend of his,—of turning 'even casual acquaintances into friends.' When you entered his little book-clad room, he welcomed you with an affectionate

greeting, set you down to something, and made you at home at once. His richest feasts, however, were those he served up from his ragged-looking books, his ungainly and dirty folios, his cobbled-up quartos, his squadrons of mean and squalid-looking duodecimos. 'So much the rather their celestial light shone inward.' How he would stutter forth their praises! What fine things he had to say about the beautiful obliquities of the 'Religio Medici,' about Burton, and Fuller, and Smollet, and Fielding, and Richardson, and Marvel, and Drayton, and fifty others, ending with the 'thrice-noble, chaste, and virtuous, but again somewhat fantastical and original brained Margaret Duchess of Newcastle!' What delightful reminiscences he had of the actors, how he used to talk of them, and how he has written them down!' How he would startle his friends by intruding on them lists of persons one would wish to have seen,—such odd alliances as Pontius Pilate and Doctor Faustus, Guy Faux and Judas Iscariot! But the evenings passed with him are not for the hasty mention of such articles as this.

"Mr. Lamb's personal appearance was remarkable. It quite realized the expectations of those who think that an author and a wit should have a distinct air, a separate costume, a particular cloth, something positive and singular about him. Such unquestionably had Mr. Lamb. Once he rejoiced in snuff-colour, but latterly his costume was inveterately black—with gaiters which seemed longing for something more substantial to close in. His legs were remarkably slight,—so indeed was his whole body, which was of short stature, but surmounted by a head of amazing fineness. We never saw any other that approached it in its intellectual cast and formation. Such only may be seen occasionally in the finer portraits of Titian. His face was deeply marked and full of noble lines—traces of sensibility, imagination, suffering, and much thought. His wit was in his eye, luminous, quick, and restless. The smile that played about his mouth was ever cordial and good-humoured; and the most cordial and delightful of its smiles were those with which he accompanied his affectionate talk with his sister, or his jokes against her. We have purposely refrained from speaking of that noble-minded and noble-hearted woman, because in describing her brother we describe her. Her heart and her intellect have been through life the counterpart of his own. The two have lived as one, in double singleness together. She has been, indeed, the supplement and completion of his existence. His obligations to her had extended beyond the period of his memory, and they accompanied him to his grave. Yet he returned them not unfittingly. The 'mighty debt of love he owed' was paid to her in full. When he

says otherwise in his charming sonnets to her, he merely expresses the ever-unsatisfied longings of true affection. Coleridge and she had the first and strongest holds upon his heart. In the pride of that first entrance into the world under the protection of his greater friend, he had not forgotten his sister. He dedicated all he had written to her. When, in after life, he had the power of acquitting his debt to her more nobly, by dedicating his whole existence to hers, he presented the offering of his poetry to Coleridge. Well might he express that strange and most touching wish, after the life they had led—'I wish that I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division. But that is impossible!' It was indeed, and the survivor is not the most fortunate. Never more shall we see the picture they used to present—worth a hundred commonplaces of common existence—when they paid the occasional visits they both loved to London—never more see the affectionate and earnest watchings on her side—the pleasant evasions, the charming deference, and the little touches of gratitude on his! We recollect being once sent by her to seek 'Charles,' who had rambled away from her. We found him in the Temple, looking up, near Crown Office Row, at the house where he was born. Such was his ever-touching habit of seeking alliance with the scenes of old times. They were the dearer to him that distance had withdrawn them. He wished to pass his life among things gone by, yet not forgotten. We shall never forget the affectionate 'Yes, boy,' with which he returned our repeating his own striking lines—

> 'Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
> Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse!'

"This paper, long as it has already proved, must not be finished without the mention of one most honourable characteristic in which Mr. Lamb has stood alone, amidst all the political strife and personal bickerings of modern literature. He put himself in personal opposition to no one. He would recognise no difference of opinion as a plea against social meeting and friendly fellowship. 'It is an error,' he said, in a spirit of deep philosophy, 'more particularly incident to persons of the correctest principles and habits, to seclude themselves from the rest of mankind, as from another species, and form into knots and clubs. The best people, herding thus exclusively, are in danger of contracting a narrowness. Heat and cold, dryness and moisture, in the natural world, do not fly asunder, to split the globe into sectarian parts and separations; but mingling, as they best may, correct the malignity

of any single predominance. The analogy holds, I suppose, in the moral world. If all the good people were to ship themselves off to terra-incognitas, what, in humanity's name, is to become of the refuse?' Charles Lamb wrote in periodicals of all opinions, and held all differing friends firmly and cordially by the hand, as if indeed of one family of brothers. His friendship with Southey did not shake his intimacy with the editor of the *Examiner*, or move him one jot from the side of Hazlitt. This friendship however, was once interrupted for some time by some wilful fancy on the part of the irritable and world-soured philosopher. At this time Southey happened to pay a compliment to Lamb at the expense of some of his companions, Hazlitt among them. The faithful and unswerving heart of the other, forsaking not, although forsaken, refused a compliment at such a price, and sent it back to the giver. The character of William Hazlitt, which he wrote at the same time, may stand for ever as one of the proudest and truest evidences of the writer's heart and intellect. It brought back, at once, the repentant offender to the arms of his friend, and nothing again separated them till Death came. Charles Lamb was, we believe, the only one of his old associates seen at the grave of Hazlitt.

"His first appearance in literature was by the side of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He came into his first battle, as he tells us (literature is a sort of warfare), under cover of that great Ajax. Their friendship in life survived all the accidents of place and time; and in death it has been but a few short months divided. We should like to see this remarkable friendship (remarkable in all respects and in all its circumstances) between two of the finest and most original geniuses in an age of no common genius, worthily and lastingly recorded. It would outvalue, in the mind of posterity, whole centuries of literary quarrels.

"Lamb never fairly recovered the death of Coleridge. He thought of little else (his sister was but another portion of himself) until his own great spirit joined his friend's. He had a habit of venting his melancholy in a sort of mirth. He would, with nothing graver than a pun, 'cleanse his bosom of the perilous that weighed' upon it. In a jest, or a few light phrases, he would lay open the recesses of his heart. So in respect of the death of Coleridge. Some old friends of his saw him two or three weeks ago, and remarked the constant turning and reference of his mind. He interrupted himself and them almost every instant with some play of affected wonder or humorous melancholy on the words '*Coleridge is dead.*' Nothing could divert him from that,

for the thought of it never left him. About the same time, we had written to him to request a few lines for the literary album of a gentleman who entertained a fitting admiration of his genius. It was the last request we were destined to make, the last kindness we were allowed to receive! He wrote in Mr. Keymer's volume, and wrote of Coleridge. This, we believe, was the last production of his pen. A strange and not unenviable chance, which saw him, at the end of his literary pilgrimage, as he had been at the beginning,—in that immortal company. We are indebted, with the reader, to the kindness of our friend for permission to print the whole of what was written. It would be impertinence to offer one remark on it. Once read, its noble and affectionate tenderness will be remembered for ever. Let it be placed over the mortal grave of Coleridge.

"'When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me that he long had been on the confines of the next world,—that he had a hunger for eternity. I grieved then that I could not grieve. But since, I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations. He was a Grecian (or in the first form) at Christ's Hospital, where I was deputy Grecian; and the same subordination and deference to him I have preserved through a life-long acquaintance. Great in his writings, he was greatest in his conversation. In him was disproved that old maxim, that we should allow every one his share of talk. He would talk from morn to dewy eve, nor cease till far midnight, yet who ever would interrupt him,—who would obstruct that continuous flow of converse, fetched from Helicon or Zion? He had the tact of making the unintelligible seem plain. Many who read the abstruser parts of his "Friend" would complain that his works did not answer to his spoken wisdom. They were identical. But he had a tone in oral delivery, which seemed to convey sense to those who were otherwise imperfect recipients. He was my fifty years' old friend without a dissension. Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again. I seem to love the house he died at more passionately than when he lived. I love the faithful Gilmans more than while they exercised their virtues towards him living. What was his mansion is consecrated to me a chapel.

'Chs. Lamb.

'Edmonton, November 24, 1834.'

"Within five weeks of this date Charles Lamb died. It is some consolation to add, that, during his illness, which lasted four days, he suffered no pain, and that his faculties remained with him to the last. A few words spoken by him the day before he died showed with what quiet collectedness he was prepared to meet death.

"These are strange words to be writing of our old friend! We can scarcely think yet that he has left us; so intimately does he seem to belong to household thoughts, and to the dear things of heart and hearth, which his writings have made yet dearer. We cannot fancy him gone from his folios, his 'midnight darlings,' his pictures, chit-chat, jokes, and ambiguities;—and yet it is so. Everything that was mortal of him is gone, except the tears and the love of his friends. His writings remain, to be the delight of thousands to come."

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF CHARLES LAMB.

I.

With SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

Letter I.] May 27, 1796.

Dear Coleridge, Make yourself perfectly easy about May. I paid his bill when I sent your clothes. I was flush of money, and am so still to all the purposes of a single life; so give yourself no further concern about it. The money would be superfluous to me if I had it.

When Southey becomes as modest as his predecessor, Milton, and publishes his Epics in duodecimo, I will read 'em; a guinea a book is somewhat exorbitant, nor have I the opportunity of borrowing the work. The extracts from it in the *Monthly Review*, and the short passages in your *Watchman*, seem to me much superior to any thing in his partnership account with Lovell. Your poems I shall procure forthwith. There were noble lines in

what you inserted in one of your Numbers from *Religious Musings;* but I thought them elaborate. I am somewhat glad you have given up that paper: it must have been dry, unprofitable, and of "dissonant mood" to your disposition. I wish you success in all your undertakings, and am glad to hear you are employed about the *Evidences of Religion.* There is need of multiplying such books a hundredfold in this philosophical age, to *prevent* converts to atheism, for they seem too tough disputants to meddle with afterwards.

Le Grice is gone to make puns in Cornwall. He has got a tutorship to a young boy living with his mother, a widow lady.[1] He will, of course, initiate him quickly in "whatsoever things are honest, lovely, and of good report." He has cut Miss Hunt completely: the poor girl is very ill on the occasion; but he laughs at it, and justifies himself by saying, "she does not see me laugh." Coleridge, I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol. My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse, at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite any one. But mad I was; and many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume, if all were told. My Sonnets I have extended to the number of nine since I saw you, and will some day communicate to you.

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[1] C. V. Le Grice, Lamb's schoolfellow at Christ's Hospital, became a popular preacher in Cornwall: though "advantageously known," says Mr. C. Robinson, "as being prohibited preaching within the diocese of Exeter." He eventually married the "widow-lady," mother of his pupil.

I am beginning a poem in blank verse, which, if I finish, I publish. White is on the eve of publishing (he took the hint from Vortigern) "Original letters of Falstaff, Shallow," &c.; a copy you shall have when it comes out. They are without exception the best imitations I ever saw. Coleridge, it may convince you of my regards for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy.

The Sonnet I send you has small merit as poetry; but you will be curious to read it when I tell you it was written in my prison-house in one of my lucid intervals.

TO MY SISTER.

If from my lips some angry accents fell,
Peevish complaint, or harsh reproof unkind,
'Twas but the error of a sickly mind
And troubled thoughts, clouding the purer well
And waters clear of Reason; and for me,
Let this my verse the poor atonement be—
My verse, which thou to praise wert e'er inclined
Too highly, and with a partial eye to see
No blemish. Thou to me didst ever show
Kindest affection; and would'st oft-times lend
An ear to the desponding love-sick lay,
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

With these lines, and with that sister's kindest remembrances to C——, I conclude.

Yours sincerely, LAMB.

Your *Conciones ad Populum* are the most eloquent politics that ever came in my way.

Write when convenient — not as a task, for here is nothing in this letter to answer.

We cannot send our remembrances to Mrs. C., not having seen her, but believe me our best good wishes attend you both.

My civic and poetic compliments to Southey if at Bristol. Why, he is a very Leviathan of Bards!—the small minnow, I!

LETTER II.] [No Month] 1796.

I am in such violent pain with the headache, that I am fit for nothing but transcribing, scarce for that. When I get your poems, and the *Joan of Arc*,[1] I will exercise my presumption in giving you my opinion of 'em. The mail does not come in before to-morrow (Wednesday) morning. The following Sonnet was composed during a walk down into Hertfordshire early in last Summer:—

The Lord of Light shakes off his drowsyhed.[2]
Fresh from his couch up springs the lusty sun,
And girds himself his mighty race to run;
Meantime, by truant love of rambling led,
I turn my back on thy detested walls,
Proud City, and thy sons I leave behind,
A selfish, sordid, money-getting kind,
Who shut their ears when holy Freedom calls.

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[1] Not Southey's poem, but one commenced by Coleridge on the same subject. What Coleridge wrote of it, which was not a great deal, was incorporated by Southey with his own work.—H.

[2] "Drowsyhed" I have met with, I think, in Spencer. 'Tis an old thing, but it rhymes with led, and rhyming covers a multitude of licences.—*C. Lamb's Manuscripts.*

I pass not thee so lightly, humble spire,
That mindest me of many a pleasure gone,
Of merrier days, of Love and Islington,
Kindling anew the flames of past desire;
And I shall muse on thee, slow journeying on,
To the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire.

The last line is a copy of Bowles's, "To the green Hamlet in the peaceful Plain." Your ears are not so very fastidious; many people would not like words so prosaic and familiar in a Sonnet as Islington and Hertfordshire. The next was written within a day or two of the last, on revisiting a spot where the scene was laid of my first Sonnet that "mock'd my step with many a lonely glade."

When last I roved these winding wood-walks green,
Green winding walks, and shady pathways sweet,
Oft-times would Anna seek the silent scene,
Shrouding her beauties in the lone retreat.
No more I hear her footsteps in the shade;
Her image only in these pleasant ways
Meets me self-wandering, where in happier days
I held free converse with my fair-hair'd maid.
I pass'd the little cottage which she loved,
The cottage which did once my all contain:
It spake of days that ne'er must come again;
Spake to my heart, and much my heart was moved.
Now "Fair befall thee, gentle maid," said I;
And from the cottage turn'd me with a sigh.

The next retains a few lines from a Sonnet of mine which you once remarked had no "body of thought" in it. I agree with you, but have preserved a part of it, and it runs thus. I flatter myself you will like it:—

A timid grace sits trembling in her eye,
As loth to meet the rudeness of men's sight

Yet shedding a delicious lunar light,
That steeps in kind oblivious ecstacy
The care-crazed mind, like some still melody:
Speaking most plain the thoughts which do possess
Her gentle sprite, peace and meek quietness,
And innocent loves,[1] and maiden purity:
A look whereof might heal the cruel smart
Of changed friends, or Fortune's wrongs unkind;
Might to sweet deeds of mercy move the heart
Of him who hates his brethren of mankind.
Turn'd are those beams from me, who fondly yet
Past joys, vain loves, and buried hopes regret.

The next and last I value most of all. 'Twas composed close upon the heels of the last, in that very wood I had in mind when I wrote "Methinks how dainty sweet."

We were two pretty babes, the youngest she,
The youngest, and the loveliest far, I ween,
And Innocence her name. The time has been
We two did love each other's company;
Time was, we two had wept to have been apart:
But when, with show of seeming good beguiled,
I left the garb and manners of a child,
And my first love for man's society,
Defiling with the world my virgin heart,
My loved companion dropp'd a tear and fled,
And hid in deepest shades her awful head.
Beloved! who can tell me where thou art—
In what delicious Eden to be found—
That I may seek thee the wide world around?

Since writing it, I have found in a poem by Hamilton of Bangor, these two lines to "Happiness:"—

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[1] Cowley uses this phrase with a somewhat different meaning. I mean loves of relatives, friends, &c.—*C. Lamb's Manuscripts.*

"Nun, sober and devout, where art thou fled
"To hide in shades thy meek, contented head?"

Lines eminently beautiful; but I do not remember having read them previously, for the credit of my tenth and eleventh lines. Parnell has two lines (which probably suggested the above) to "Contentment:"

"Whither, ah! whither art thou fled,
"To hide thy meek, contented[1] head?"

Cowley's exquisite "Elegy on the death of his friend Harvey," suggested the phrase of "we two."

"Was there a tree that did not know
"The love betwixt us two?"

So much for acknowledged plagiarisms, the confession of which I know not whether it has more of vanity or modesty in it. As to my blank verse, I am so dismally slow and sterile of ideas (I speak from my heart) that I much question if it will ever come to any issue. I have hitherto only hammered out a few independent, unconnected snatches, not in a capacity to be sent. I am very ill, and will rest till I have read your poems, for which I am very thankful. I have one more favour to beg of you, that you never mention Mr. May's affair in any sort, much less *think* of repaying. Are we not flocci-nauci-what-d'ye-call-'em-ists? We have just learned that my poor brother has had a sad accident: a large stone, blown down by yesterday's high wind, has bruised his leg in a most shocking manner; he is under the care of Cruikshanks. Coleridge! there are 10,000 objections against my paying you a visit at Bristol; it cannot be else; but in this world 'tis better not to think too much of

[1] An odd epithet for Contentment in a poet so poetical as Parnell. —*C. Lamb's Manuscripts.*

pleasant possibles, that we may not be out of humour with present insipids. Should any thing bring you to London, you will recollect No. 7, Little Queen Street, Holborn.

I shall be too ill to call on Wordsworth myself, but will take care to transmit him his poem, when I have read it. I saw Le Grice the day before his departure, and mentioned incidentally his "teaching the young idea how to shoot." Knowing him and the probability there is of people having a propensity to pun in his company, you will not wonder that we both stumbled on the same pun at once, he eagerly anticipating me,—"he would teach him to shoot!" Poor le Grice! if wit alone could entitle a man to respect, &c., he has written a very witty little pamphlet lately, satirical upon college declamations. When I send White's book, I will add that. I am sorry there should be any difference between you and Southey. "Between you two there should be peace," tho' I must say I have borne him no good will since he spirited you away from among us. What is become of Moschus? You sported some of his sublimities, I see, in your *Watchman*. Very decent things. So much for to-night from your afflicted, headachey, sorethroaty, humble servant, C. Lamb.

Tuesday Night.—Of your *Watchman*, the Review of Burke was the best prose. I augured great things from the first Number. There is some exquisite poetry interpersed. I have re-read the extract from the *Religious Musings*, and retract whatever invidious there was in my censure of it as elaborate. There are times when one is not in a disposition thoroughly to relish good writing. I have re-read it

in a more favourable moment, and hesitate not to pronounce it sublime. If there be any thing in it approaching to tumidity, (which I meant not to infer; by *elaborate* I meant simply laboured,) it is the gigantic hyperbole by which you describe the evils of existing society: "snakes, lions, hyenas, and behemoths," is carrying your resentment beyond bounds. The pictures of the "The Simoom," of "Frenzy and Ruin," of "The Whore of Babylon," and "The Cry of the Foul Spirits disherited of Earth," and "the strange beatitude" which the good man shall recognise in heaven, as well as the particularizing of the children of wretchedness, (I have unconsciously included every part of it,) form a variety of uniform excellence. I hunger and thirst to read the poem complete. That is a capital line in your sixth Number:

"This dark, frieze-coated, hoarse, teeth-chattering month."

They are exactly such epithets as Burns would have stumbled on, whose poem on the ploughed-up daisy you seem to have had in mind. Your complaint that some of your readers thought there was too much, some too little original matter in your Numbers, reminds me of poor dead Parsons in the *Critic*. "Too little incident! Give me leave to tell you, sir, there is too much incident." I had like to have forgot thanking you for that exquisite little morsel, the first Sclavonian Song. The expression in the second,—"more happy to be unhappy in hell:" is it not very quaint? Accept my thanks, in common with those of all who love good poetry, for "The Braes of Yarrow."[1] I congratulate you on the

[1] The History of *The Watchman*, and of Coleridge's peregrinations connected with it, is given in Cottle's Recollections.—F.

enemies you must have made by your splendid invective against the barterers in human flesh and sinews. Coleridge! you will rejoice to hear that Cowper is recovered from his lunacy, and is employed on his translation of the Italian, &c., poems of Milton for an edition where Fuseli presides as designer. Coleridge! to an idler like myself, to write and receive letters are both very pleasant; but I wish not to break in upon your valuable time by expecting to hear very frequently from you. Reserve that obligation for your moments of lassitude, when you have nothing else to do; for your loco-restive and all your idle propensities, of course, have given way to the duties of providing for a family. The mail is come in, but no parcel; yet this is Tuesday. Farewell, then, till to-morrow; for a niche and a nook I must leave for criticisms. By the way, I hope you do not send your only copy of *Joan of Arc:* I will in that case return it immediately.

Your parcel *is* come: you have been *lavish* of your presents.

Wordsworth's poem I have hurried through, not without delight. Poor Lovell! my heart almost accuses me for the light manner I lately spoke of him, not dreaming of his death. My heart bleeds for your accumulated troubles: God send you through 'em with patience. I conjure you dream not that I will ever think of being repaid; the very word is galling to the ears. I have read all your *Religious Musings* with uninterrupted feelings of profound admiration. You may safely rest your fame on it. The best remaining things are what I have before read, and they lose nothing by my recollection of your manner of reciting 'em, for I too bear in mind "the voice, the look" of absent friends, and can

occasionally mimic their manner for the amusement of those who have seen 'em. Your impassioned manner of recitation I can recall at any time to mine own heart and to the ears of the bystanders. I rather wish you had left the monody on Chatterton concluding, as it did, abruptly. It had more of unity. The conclusion of your *Religious Musings*, I fear, will entitle you to the reproof of your beloved woman, who wisely will not suffer your fancy to run riot, but bids you walk humbly with your God. The last words,

> "I discipline my young and novice thought
> "In ministeries of heart-stirring song,"

though not now new to me, cannot be enough admired. To speak politely, they are a well-turned compliment to Poetry. I hasten to read *Joan of Arc*, &c. I have read your lines at the beginning of the second book: they are worthy of Milton; but in my mind yield to your *Religious Musings*. I shall read the whole carefully, and in some future letter take the liberty to particularize my opinions of it. Of what is new to me among your poems next to the "Musings," that beginning "My Pensive Sara" gave me most pleasure: the lines in it I just alluded to are most exquisite; they made my sister and self smile, as conveying a pleasing picture of Mrs. C. checking your wild wanderings, which we were so fond of hearing you indulge when among us. It has endeared us more than any thing to your good lady; and your own self-reproof that follows, delighted us. 'Tis a charming poem throughout. (You have well remarked that *charming*, *admirable*, *exquisite* are the words expressive of feelings more than conveying of ideas; else I might plead very well want of room in my paper as excuse for generalising). I want room to

tell you how we are charmed with your verses in the manner of Spenser, &c., &c., &c., &c., &c. I am glad you resume the *Watchman*. Change the name: leave out all articles of news, and whatever things are peculiar to newspapers, and confine yourself to ethics, verse, criticism; or, rather do not confine yourself. Let your plan be as diffuse as the *Spectator*, and I'll answer for it the work prospers. If I am vain enough to think I can be a contributor; rely on my inclinations. Coleridge! in reading your *Religious Musings* I felt a transient superiority over you. I *have* seen Priestley. I love to see his name repeated in your writings. I love and honour him, almost profanely. You would be charmed with his *Sermons*, if you never read 'em. You have doubtless read his books illustrative of the doctrine of Necessity. Prefixed to a late work of his, in answer to Paine, there is a Preface, giving an account of the man, and his services to men, written by Lindsey, his dearest friend, well worth your reading.

Tuesday Eve.—Forgive my prolixity, which is yet too brief for all I could wish to say. God give you comfort, and all that are of your household! Our loves and best good wishes to Mrs. C.

C. LAMB.

LETTER III.] June 10, 1796.

With *Joan of Arc* I have been delighted, amazed. I had not presumed to expect any thing of such excellence from Southey. Why, the poem is alone sufficient to redeem the character of the age we live in from the imputation of degenerating in Poetry,

were there no such beings extant as Burns, and Bowles, Cowper, and ——: fill up the blank how you please; I say nothing. The subject is well chosen. It opens well. To become more particular, I will notice in their order a few passages that chiefly struck me on perusal. Page 26, "Fierce and terrible Benevolence!" is a phrase full of grandeur and originality. The whole context made me feel *possessed*, even like Joan herself. Page 28, "It is most horrible with the keen sword to gore the finely-fibred human frame," and what follows, pleased me mightily. In the 2nd Book, the first forty lines in particular are majestic and high-sounding. Indeed the whole vision of the Palace of Ambition and what follows are supremely excellent. Your simile of the Laplander,

> ——————"by Niemi lake
> "Or Balda Zhiok, or the mossy stone
> "Of Solfar-kapper,[1]

will bear comparison with any in Milton for fulness of circumstance and lofty pacedness of versification. Southey's similes, though many of 'em are capital, are all inferior. In one of his books, the simile of the oak in the storm occurs, I think, four times. To return: the light in which you view the heathen deities is accurate and beautiful. Southey's personifications in this book are so many fine and faultless pictures. I was much pleased with your manner of accounting for the reason why monarchs take delight in war. At the 447th line you have placed Prophets and Enthusiasts cheek by jowl, on too intimate a footing for the dignity of the former. Necessarian-like-speaking, it is correct. Page 98, "Dead is the Douglas! cold thy

[1] These lines are in Coleridge's Poem entitled *The Destiny of Nations · a Vision*.—T.

warrior frame, illustrious Buchan," &c., are of kindred excellence with Gray's "Cold is Cadwallo's tongue," &c. How famously the Maid baffles the Doctors, Seraphic and Irrefragable, "with all their trumpery!' Page 126, the procession, the appearances of the Maid, of the Bastard Son of Orleans and of Tremouille, are full of fire and fancy, and exquisite melody of versification. The personifications from line 303 to 309, in the heat of the battle, had better been omitted; they are not very striking, and only encumber. The converse which Joan and Conrade hold on the banks of the Loire is altogether beautiful. Page 313, the conjecture that in dreams "all things are that seem," is one of those conceits which the Poet delights to admit into his creed; a creed, by the way, more marvellous and mystic than ever Athanasius dreamed of. Page 315, I need only *mention* those lines ending with "She saw a serpent gnawing at her heart!" They are good imitative lines, "he toiled and toiled, of toil to reap no end, but endless toil and never-ending woe." Page 347, Cruelty is such as Hogarth might have painted her. Page 361, all the passage about Love (where he seems to confound conjugal love with creating and preserving love) is very confused, and sickens me with a load of useless personifications; else that ninth Book is the finest in the volume—an exquisite combination of the ludicrous and the terrible: I have never read either, even in translation, but such I conceive to be the manner of Dante or Ariosto. The tenth Book is the most languid. On the whole, considering the celerity wherewith the poem was finished, I was astonished at the infrequency of weak lines. I had expected to find it verbose. Joan, I think, does too little in

battle ; Dunois perhaps the same ; Conrade too much. The anecdotes interspersed among the battles refresh the mind very agreeably, and I am delighted with the very many passages of simple pathos abounding throughout the poem ; passages which the author of "Crazy Kate" might have written. Has not Master Southey, in his Preface, spoke very slightingly, and disparagingly of Cowper's Homer? What makes him reluctant to give Cowper his fame? And does not Southey use too often the expletives "did," and "does?" They have a good effect at times, but are too inconsiderable, or rather become blemishes, when they mark a style. On the whole, I expect Southey one day to rival Milton: I already deem him equal to Cowper, and superior to all living poets besides. What says Coleridge? The "Monody on Henderson" is *immensely good:* the rest of that little volume is *readable, and above mediocrity.* I proceed to a more pleasant task; pleasant because the poems are yours; pleasant because you impose the task on me; and pleasant, let me add, because it will confer a whimsical importance on me to sit in judgment upon your rhymes. First, though, let me thank you again and again, in my own and my sister's name, for your invitations. Nothing could give us more pleasure than to come, but (were there no other reasons) while my brother's leg is so bad it is out of the question. Poor fellow! he is very feverish and light-headed ; but Cruikshanks has pronounced the symptoms favourable, and gives us every hope that there will be no need of amputation: God send not! We are necessarily confined with him all the afternoon and evening till very late, so that I am stealing a few minutes to write to you.

Thank you for your frequent letters: you are the only correspondent, and, I might add, the only friend I have in the world. I go nowhere, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech, and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society; and I am left alone. Allen calls only occasionally, as though it were a duty rather, and seldom stays ten minutes. Then judge how thankful I am for your letters! Do not, however, burthen yourself with the correspondence. I trouble you again so soon, only in obedience to your injunctions. Complaints apart, proceed we to our task. I am called away to tea; thence must wait upon my brother; so must delay till to-morrow. Farewell!—*Wednesday.*

Thursday.—I will first notice what is new to me. Thirteenth page: "The thrilling tones that concentrate the soul" is a nervous line; and the first six lines of page 14 are very pretty; the twenty-first effusion is a perfect thing. That in the manner of Spenser is very sweet, particularly at the close: the thirty-fifth effusion is most exquisite; that line in particular, "And, tranquil, muse upon tranquillity." It is the very reflex pleasure that distinguishes the tranquillity of a thinking being from that of a shepherd, a modern one I would be understood to mean, a Damætas, one that keeps other people's sheep. Certainly, Coleridge, your letter from Shurton Bars has less merit than most things in your volume; personally, it may chime in best with your own feelings, and therefore you love it best. It has however, great merit. In your fourth epistle, *that* is an exquisite paragraph, and fancy-full, of "A stream there is which rolls in lazy flow," &c., &c. "Mur-

murs sweet undersong 'mid jasmine bowers" is a sweet line; and so are the three next. The concluding simile is far-fetched—"tempest-honoured" is a quaintish phrase. Of the Monody on H [artley] I will here only notice these lines, as superlatively excellent. That energetic one, "Shall I not praise thee, scholar, Christian, friend," like to that beautiful climax of Shakspeare's, "King, Hamlet, Royal Dane, Father;" "yet memory turns from little men to thee," "And sported careless round their fellow child." The whole, I repeat it, is immensely good.

Yours is a poetical family. I was much surprised and pleased to see the signature of Sara to that elegant composition, the fifth epistle. I dare not *criticise* the *Religious Musings:* I like not to select any part, where all is excellent. I can only admire, and thank you for it in the name of a Christian, as well as a lover of good poetry: only let me ask, Is not that thought and those words in Young, "stands in the sun,"—or is it only such as Young, in one of his *better moments*, might have writ?—

> "Believe thou, O my soul,
> "Life is a vision, shadowy of Truth;
> "And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
> "Shapes of a dream!"

I thank you for these lines in the name of a necessarian, and for what follows in the next paragraph, in the name of a child of fancy. After all, you cannot, nor ever will, write any thing with which I shall be so delighted as what I have heard yourself repeat. You came to town, and I saw you at a time when your heart was yet bleeding with recent wounds. Like

yourself, I was sore galled with disappointed hope. You had

> ———" many an holy lay
> "That, mourning, soothed the mourner on his way."

I had ears of sympathy to drink them in, and they yet vibrate pleasant on the sense. When I read in your little volume, your nineteenth effusion, or the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth, or what you call the "Sigh," I think I hear *you* again. I image to myself the little smoky room at the *Salutation and Cat*,[1] where we have sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy. When you left London I felt a dismal void in my heart. I found myself cut off, at one and the same time, from two most dear to me. "How blest with ye the path could I have trod of quiet life!' In your conversation you had blended so many pleasant fancies that they cheated me of my grief. But in your absence the tide of melancholy rushed in again, and did its worst mischief by overwhelming my reason. I have recovered, but feel a stupor that makes me indifferent to the hopes and fears of this life. I sometimes wish to introduce a religious turn of mind; but habits are strong things, and my religious fervours are confined, alas! to some fleeting moments of occasional solitary devotion. A correspondence, opening with you, has roused me a little from my lethargy, and made me conscious of existence. Indulge me in it: I will not be very troublesome. At some future time I will amuse you with an account, as full as my memory

[1] At No. 17, Newgate Street.

will permit, of the strange turn my frenzy took. I look back upon it at times with a gloomy kind of envy; for, while it lasted, I had many, many hours of pure happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad! All now seems to me vapid, comparatively so. Excuse this selfish digression. Your "Monody" is so superlatively excellent, that I can only wish it perfect, which I can't help feeling it is not quite. Indulge me in a few conjectures. What I am going to propose would make it more compressed, and, I think, more energetic, though I am sensible at the expense of many beautiful lines. Let it begin "Is this the land of song-ennobled line?" and proceed to "Otway's famish'd form;" then, "Thee, Chatterton," to "harps of Seraphim;" then, "clad in Nature's rich array," to "orient day;" then "but soon the scathing lightning," to "blighted land;" then, "sublime of thought," to "his bosom glows;" then

> "But soon upon his poor unshelter'd head
> "Did Penury her sickly mildew shed
> "Ah! where are fled the charms of early Grace,
> "And Joy's wild gleams that lighten'd o'er his face?"

Then "youth of tumultuous soul" to "sigh," as before. The rest may all stand down to "gaze upon the waves below." What follows now may come next as detached verses, suggested by the Monody, rather than a part of it. They are indeed, in themselves, very sweet:

> "And we, at sober eve, would round thee throng
> "Would hang, enraptured, on thy stately song,"

in particular, perhaps. If I am obscure, you may

understand me by counting lines. I have proposed omitting twenty-four lines. I feel that thus compressed it would gain energy, but think it most likely you will not agree with me; for who shall go about to bring opinions to the bed of Procrustes, and introduce among the sons of men a monotony of identical feelings? I only propose with diffidence. Reject, if you please, with as little remorse as you would the colour of a coat or the pattern of a buckle, where our fancies differed. The lines "Friend to the Friendless," &c., which you may think rudely disbranched from the Chatterton, will patch in with the Man of Ross, where they were at once at home, with two more which I recollect,

> "And o'er the dowried virgin's snowy cheek
> "Bade bridal Love suffuse his blushes meek,"

very beautiful.

The "Pixies" is a perfect thing; and so are the "Lines on the Spring," page 28. The "Epitaph on an Infant," like a Jack-o'-lantern, has danced about (or like Dr. Forster's scholars) out of the *Morning Chronicle* into the *Watchman*, and thence back into your Collection. It is very pretty, and you seem to think so; but, may be, have o'erlooked its chief merit, that of filling up a whole page. I had once deemed Sonnets of unrivalled use that way; but your Epitaphs, I find, are the more diffuse. "Edmund" still holds its place among your best verses. "Ah! fair delights" to "roses round," in your Poem called "Absence," recall (none more forcibly) to my mind the tones in which *you recited it*. I will not notice, in this tedious (to you) manner, verses which have been so long delightful to me, and which you already know my

opinion of. Of this kind are Bowles, Priestley, and that most exquisite and most Bowles-like of all, the nineteenth effusion. It would have better ended with "agony of care:" the last two lines are obvious and unnecessary, and you need not now make fourteen lines of it: now it is rechristened from a Sonnet to an Effusion. Schiller might have written the twentieth Effusion: 'tis worthy of him in any sense. I was glad to meet with those lines you sent me, when my sister was so ill: I had lost the copy, and I felt not a little proud at seeing my name in your verse. The "Complaint of Ninathoma" (first stanza in particular) is the best, or only good imitation, of Ossian I ever saw, your "Restless Gale" excepted. "To an Infant" is most sweet. Is not "foodful," though, very harsh? Would not "dulcet" fruit be less harsh, or some other friendly bi-syllable? In "Edmund," "Frenzy, fierce-eyed child," is not so well as "frantic," though that is an epithet adding nothing to the meaning. Slander *couching* was better than "squatting." In the "Man of Ross" it *was* a better line thus:

"If 'neath this roof thy wine-cheer'd moments pass,"

than as it stands now. Time nor nothing can reconcile me to the concluding five lines of "Kosciusko:" call it any thing you will but sublime. In my twelfth effusion I would rather have seen what I wrote myself, though they bear no comparison with your exquisite lines—

"On rose-leaf'd beds, amid your faery bowers," &c.

I love my Sonnets because they are the reflected images of my own feelings at different times. To instance, in the thirteenth—

"How reason reel'd," &c..

are good lines, but must spoil the whole with me, who know it is only a fiction of yours, and that the "rude dashings" did in fact not "rock me to repose." I grant the same objection applies not to the former Sonnet; but still I love my own feelings: they are dear to memory, though they now and then wake a sigh or a tear. "Thinking on divers things foredone," I charge you, Coleridge, spare my ewe lambs; and though a gentleman may borrow six lines in an epic poem, (I should have no objection to borrow five hundred, and without acknowledging,) still, in a sonnet, a personal poem, I do not "ask my friend the aiding verse." I would not wrong your feelings, by proposing any improvements (did I think myself capable of suggesting 'em) in such personal poems as "Thou bleedest, my poor heart!"—'od so,—I am caught—I have already done it; but that simile I propose abridging, would not change the feeling or introduce any alien ones. Do you understand me? In the twenty-eighth, however, and in the "Sigh," and that composed at Clevedon, things that come from the heart direct, not by the medium of the fancy, I would not suggest an alteration. When my blank verse is finished, or any long fancy poems, *propino tibi alterandum, cut-up-andum, abridgandum,* just what you will with it; but spare my ewe lambs! That to "Mrs. Siddons," now, you were welcome to improve, if it had been worth it; but I say unto you again, Coleridge, spare my ewe lambs! I must confess were they mine, I should omit, *in editione secundâ,* Effusions two and three, because satiric, and below the dignity of the poet of *Religious Musings,* fifth, seventh, half of the eighth, that "Written in early

youth," as far as "thousand eyes,"—though I part not unreluctantly with that lively line—

"Chaste joyance dancing in her bright blue eyes,"

and one or two more just thereabouts. But I would substitute for it that sweet poem called "Recollection," in the fifth Number of the *Watchman;* better, I think, than the remainder of this poem, though not differing materially: as the poem now stands it looks altogether confused. And do not omit those lines upon the "Early Blossom," in your sixth Number of the *Watchman:* and I would omit the tenth Effusion or, what would do better, alter and improve the last four lines. In fact, I suppose, if they were mine, I should *not* omit 'em; but your verse is, for the most part, so exquisite, that I like not to see aught of meaner matter mixed with it. Forgive my petulance, and often, I fear, ill-founded criticisms; and forgive me that I have, by this time, made your eyes and head ache with my long letter; but I cannot forego hastily the pleasure and pride of thus conversing with you. You did not tell me whether I was to include the *Conciones ad Populum* in my remarks on your poems. They are not unfrequently sublime; and I think you could not do better than to turn 'em into verse, if you have nothing else to do. Allen, I am sorry to say, is a *confirmed* Atheist. Stoddart, a cold-hearted, well-bred, conceited disciple of Godwin, does him no good. His wife has several daughters, (one of 'em as old as himself.) Surely there is something unnatural in such a marriage.

How I sympathize with you on the dull duty of a reviewer, and heartily damn with you Ned Evans and

the Prosodist. I shall, however, wait impatiently for the articles in the *Critical Review*, next month, because they are *yours*. Young Evans (W. Evans, a branch of a family you were once so intimate with) is come into our office, and sends his love to you! Coleridge, I devoutly wish that Fortune, who has made sport with you so long, may play one freak more,—throw you into London, or some spot near it, and there snug-ify you for life. 'Tis a selfish, but natural wish for me, cast as I am, "on life's wide plain, friendless." Are you acquainted with Bowles? I see, by his last Elegy, (written at Bath,) you are near neighbours.—*Thursday*.

"And I can think I can see the groves again—was it the voice of thee—turns not the voice of thee, my buried friend—who dries with her dark locks the tender tear," are touches as true to Nature as any in his other Elegy, written at the Hot Wells, about poor Kassell, &c. You are doubtless acquainted with it.

I do not know that I entirely agree with you in your stricture upon my Sonnet "To Innocence." To men whose hearts are not quite deadened by their commerce with the world, innocence (no longer familiar) becomes an awful idea. So I felt when I wrote it. Your other censures (qualified and sweetened, though, with praises somewhat extravagant) I perfectly coincide with; yet I choose to retain the word "lunar." Indulge a "lunatic" in his loyalty to his mistress the Moon! I have just been reading a most pathetic copy of verses on Sophia Pringle, who was hanged and burnt for coining. One of the strokes of pathos (which are very many, all somewhat obscure,) is "She lifted up her guilty forger to heaven." A note explains, by "forger," her right hand, with which she forged or coined the base metal. For

"pathos" read *bathos*. You have put me out of conceit with my blank verse by your *Religious Musings*. I think it will come to nothing. I do not like 'em enough to send 'em. I have just been reading a book which I may be too partial to, as it was the delight of my childhood; but I will recommend it to you: it is Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler*. All the scientific part you may omit in reading. The dialogue is very simple, full of pastoral beauties, and will charm you. Many pretty old verses are interspersed. This letter, which would be a week's work reading only, I do not wish you to answer it in less than a month. I shall be richly content with a letter from you some day early in July; though, if you get any how *settled* before then, pray let me know it immediately; 'twould give me so much satisfaction. Concerning the Unitarian chapel, the salary is the only scruple that the most rigid moralist would admit as valid. Concerning the tutorage, is not the salary low, and absence from your family unavoidable? London is the only fostering soil for genius. Nothing more occurs just now; so I will leave you, in mercy, one small white spot empty below, to repose your eyes upon, fatigued as they must be with the wilderness of words they have by this time painfully travelled through. God love you, Coleridge, and prosper you through life; though mine will be loss if your lot is to be cast at Bristol, or at Nottingham, or anywhere but London. Our loves to Mrs. C—. C. L.

Friday, 10th June, 1796.

LETTER IV.] Monday Night, June 13, 1796.

Unfurnished at present with any sheet-filling subject, I shall continue my letter gradually and journal-wise. My second thoughts entirely coincide with your comments on *Joan of Arc* and I can only wonder at my childish judgment which overlooked the 1st book, and could prefer the 9th: not that I was insensible to the soberer beauties of the former; but the latter caught me with its glare of magic: the former, however, left a more pleasing general recollection in my mind. Let me add, the 1st book was the favourite of my sister; and *I* now, with Joan, often "think on Domremi and the fields of Arc." I must not pass over without acknowledging my obligations to your full and satisfactory account of personifications. I have read it again and again, and it will be a guide to my future taste. Perhaps I had estimated Southey's merits too much by number, weight, and measure. I now agree completely and entirely in your opinion of the genius of Southey. Your own image of Melancholy is illustrative of what you teach, and in itself masterly. I conjecture it is "disbranched" from one of your embryo "hymns." When they are mature of birth (were I you) I should print 'em, in one separate volume, with *Religious Musings* and your part of the *Joan of Arc*. Birds of the same soaring wing should hold on their flight in company. Once for all, (and by renewing the subject you will only renew in me the condemnation of Tantalus,) I hope to be able to pay you a visit (if you are then at Bristol) some time in the latter end of August or beginning of September, for a week or fortnight: before that time office business puts an absolute veto on my coming.

"And if a sigh that speaks regret of happier times appear,
"A glimpse of joy that we have met shall shine and dry the tear."

Of the blank verses I spoke of, the following lines are the only tolerably complete ones I have writ out of not more than one hundred and fifty. That I get on so slowly you may fairly impute to want of practice in composition, when I declare to you that (the few verses which you have seen excepted) I have not writ fifty lines since I left school. It may not be amiss to remark that my grandmother (on whom the verses are written) lived housekeeper in a family the fifty or sixty last years of her life—that she was a woman of exemplary piety and goodness—and for many years before her death was terribly afflicted with a cancer in her breast, which she bore with true Christian patience. You may think that I have not kept enough apart the ideas of her heavenly and her earthly master; but recollect I have designedly given in to her own way of feeling; and if she had a failing 'twas that she respected her master's family too much, not reverenced her Maker too little. The lines begin imperfectly, as I may probably connect 'em if I finish at all: and if I do, Biggs shall print 'em, (in a more economical way than you yours,) for, Sonnets and all, they won't make a thousand lines as I propose completing 'em, and the substance must be wire-drawn.

LETTER V.] Tuesday Evening, June 14, 1796.

I am not quite satisfied now with the Chatterton, and, with your leave, will try my hand at it again. A master joiner, you know, may leave a cabinet to be

finished by his journeyman, when his own hands are full.

To your list of illustrative personifications, into which a fine imagination enters, I will take leave to add the following from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wife for a Month;* 'tis the conclusion of a description of a sea fight:—"The game of *death* was never played so nobly: the meagre thief grew wanton in his mischiefs; and his shrunk, hollow eyes smiled on his ruins." There is fancy in these of a lower order, from *Bonduca;*—"Then did I see these valiant men of Britain, like boding owls creep into tods of ivy, and hoot their fears to one another nightly." Not that it is a personification; only it just caught my eye in a little extract book I keep, which is full of quotations from Beaumont and Fletcher in particular, in which authors I can't help thinking there is a greater richness of poetical fancy than in any one, Shakspeare excepted. Are you acquainted with Massinger? At a hazard I will trouble you with a passage from a play of his called *A Very Woman.* The lines are spoken by a lover (disguised) to his faithless mistress. You will remark the fine effect of the double endings. You will by your ear distinguish the lines, for I write 'em as prose. "Not far from where my father lives, *a lady*, a neighbour by, blest with as great a *beauty* as Nature durst bestow without *undoing*, dwelt, and most happily, as I thought then, and blest the house a thousand times she *dwelt* in. This beauty, in the blossom of my youth, when my first fire knew no adulterate *incense*, nor I no way to flatter but my *fondness;* in all the bravery my friends could *show me*, in all the faith my innocence could *give me*, in the best language my true tongue could *tell me*, and all the broken sighs my

sick heart *lend me*, I sued and served. Long did I serve this *lady*, long was my travail, long my trade to *win her:* with all the duty of my soul I SERVED HER." "Then she must love." "She did, but never me: she could not *love me;* she would not love, she hated,—more, she *scorn'd me;* and in so poor and base a way *abused me* for all my services, for all my *bounties*, so bold neglects flung on me." "What out of love, and worthy love, I *gave her*, (shame to her most unworthy mind!) to fools, to girls, to fiddlers, and her boys she flung, all in disdain of me." One more passage strikes my eye from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Palamon and Arcite*.[1] One of 'em complains in prison:

> "This is all our world:
> "We shall know nothing here but one another;
> "Hear nothing but the clock that tells our woes.
> "The vine shall grow, but we shall never see it."

Is not the last circumstance exquisite? I mean not to lay myself open by saying they exceed Milton, and perhaps Collins, in sublimity. But don't you conceive all poets, after Shakspeare, yield to 'em in variety of genius? Massinger treads close on their heels; but you are most probably as well acquainted with his writings as your humble servant. My quotations, in that case, will only serve to show my barrenness of matter. Southey, in simplicity and tenderness,

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[1] The title of the play here alluded to is *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and the most prominent characters in it are *Palamon* and *Arcite*. In this hearty enthusiasm for the Elizabethan writers, will be found part of the charm of Lamb's style: as he had thoroughly imbued his soul not with their phrases merely, but with their modes of thought.—F.

is excelled decidedly only, I think, by Beaumont and Fletcher—in his "Maid's Tragedy" and some parts of "Philaster" in particular, and elsewhere occasionally; and perhaps by Cowper in his "Crazy Kate," and in parts of his translation: such as the speeches of Hecuba and Andromache. I long to know your opinion of that translation. The Odyssey especially is surely very Homeric. What nobler than the appearance of Phœbus at the beginning of the Iliad—the lines ending with "Dread sounding, bounding on the silver bow!"

I beg you will give me your opinion of the translation; it afforded me high pleasure. As curious a specimen of translation as ever fell into my hands is a young man's in our office, of a French novel. What in the original was literally "amiable delusions of the fancy," he proposed to render "the fair frauds of the imagination!" I had much trouble in licking the book into any meaning at all. Yet did the knave clear fifty or sixty pounds by subscription and selling the copyright: the book itself not a week's work! To-day's portion of my journalising epistle has been very dull and poverty-stricken. I will here end.

Tuesday Night. — I have been drinking egg-hot and smoking Oronooko, (associated circumstances, which ever forcibly recall to my mind our evenings and nights at the *Salutation*). My eyes and brain are heavy and asleep, but my heart is awake; and if words came as ready as ideas, and ideas as feelings, I could say ten hundred kind things. Coleridge, you know not my supreme happiness at having one on earth (though counties separate us) whom I can

call a friend. Remember you those tender lines of Logan's?—

> "Our broken friendships we deplore,
> "And loves of youth that are no more;
> "No after-friendships e'er can raise
> "Th' endearments of our early days,
> "And ne'er the heart such fondness prove
> "As when we first began to love."

I am writing at random, and half-tipsy, what you may not *equally* understand, as you will be sober when you read it; but *my* sober and *my* half-tipsy hours you are alike a sharer in. Good night.

> "Then up rose our bard, like a prophet in drink,
> "Craigdoroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink."
>
> BURNS.

Thursday.—I am now in high hopes to be able to visit you, if perfectly convenient on your part, by the end of next month—perhaps the last week or fortnight in July. A change of scene and a change of faces would do me good, even if that scene were not to be Bristol, and those faces Coleridge's and his friends. In the words of Terence, a little altered, *Tædet me hujus quotidiani mundi*, I am heartily sick of the every-day scenes of life. I shall half wish you unmarried (don't show this to Mrs. C.) for one evening only, to have the pleasure of smoking with you and drinking egg-hot in some little smoky room in a pothouse, for I know not yet how I shall like you in a decent room and looking quite happy. My best love and respects to Sara notwithstanding.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES LAMB.

LETTER VI.] July 1st, 1796.

The first moment I can come I will; but my hopes of coming yet a while yet hang on a ticklish thread. The coach I come by is immaterial, as I shall so easily, by your direction, find ye out. My mother is grown so entirely helpless (not having any use of her limbs) that Mary is necessarily confined from ever sleeping out, she being her bed-fellow. She thanks you though, and will accompany me in spirit. Most exquisite are the lines from Withers. Your own lines, introductory to your poem on "Self," run smoothly and pleasurably, and I exhort you to continue 'em. What shall I say to your "Dactyls"? They are what you would call good *per se;* but a parody on some of 'em is just now suggesting itself, and you shall have it rough and unlicked. I mark with figures the lines parodied:—

4.—Sorely your Dactyls do drag along limp-footed.
5.—Sad is the measure that hangs a clod round 'em so.
6.—Meagre and languid, proclaiming its wretchedness.
1.—Weary, unsatisfied, not a little sick of 'em.
11.—Cold is my tired heart, I have no charity.
2.—Painfully travelling thus over the rugged road.
7.—O begone, measure, half Latin, half English, then.
12.—Dismal your Dactyls are, God help ye, rhyming ones!

I possibly may not come this fortnight; therefore all thou hast to do is not to look for me any particular day, only to write word immediately, if at any time you quit Bristol, lest I come and Taffy be not at home. I *hope* I can come in a day or two; but young Savory, of my office, is suddenly taken ill in this very nick of time, and I must officiate for him till he can come to work again. Had the knave gone sick, and died, and putrefied, at any other time, philosophy

might have afforded one comfort; but just now I have no patience with him. Quarles I am as great a stranger to as I was to Withers. I wish you would try and do something to bring our elder bards into more general fame. I writhe with indignation when, in books of criticism, where common-place quotation is heaped upon quotation, I find no mention of such men as Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher,—men with whom succeeding dramatic writers (Otway alone excepted) can bear no manner of comparison. Stupid Knox hath noticed none of 'em among his extracts.

Thursday.—Mrs. C——— can scarce guess how she has gratified me by her very kind letter and sweet little poem. I feel that I *should* thank her in rhyme; but she must take my acknowledgment, at present, in plain honest prose. The uncertainty in which I yet stand, whether I can come or no, damps my spirits, reduces me a degree below prosaical, and keeps me in a suspense that fluctuates between hope and fear. Hope is a charming, lively, blue-eyed wench, and I am always glad of her company, but could dispense with the visitor she brings with her—her younger sister, Fear,—a white-livered, lily-cheeked, bashful, palpitating, awkward hussy, that hangs, like a green girl, at her sister's apron-strings, and will go with her whithersoever *she* goes. For the life and soul of me I could not improve those lines in your poem on the Prince and Princess; so I changed them to what you bid me, and left 'em at Perry's.[1] I think 'em altogether good, and do not see why you were solicitous about *any* alteration. I have not yet seen, but will

[1] Some "occasional" verses of Coleridge's, written to order for the *Morning Chronicle*.—T.

make it my business to see, to-day's *Chronicle*, for your verses on Horne Tooke. Dyer stanza'd him in one of the papers t'other day; but, I think, unsuccessfully. Tooke's friends' meeting was, I suppose, a dinner of condolence.[1] I am not sorry to find you (for all Sara) immersed in clouds of smoke and metaphysics. You know I had a sneaking kindness for this last noble science, and you taught me some smattering of it. I look to become no mean proficient under your tuition. Coleridge, what do you mean by saying you wrote to me about Plutarch and Porphyry?[2] I received no such letter, nor remember a syllable of the matter, yet am not apt to forget any part of your epistles, least of all, an injunction like that. I will cast about for 'em, tho' I am a sad hand to know what books are worth, and both those worthy gentlemen are alike out of my line. To-morrow I shall be less suspensive, and in better cue to write; so good-bye at present.

Friday Evening.—That execrable aristocrat and knave, Richardson, has given me an absolute refusal of leave. The *poor man* cannot guess at my disappointment. Is it not hard, "this dread dependence on the low-bred mind?" Continue to write to me tho', and I must be content. Our loves and best good wishes attend upon you both. LAMB.

Savory did return, but there are two or three more ill and absent, which was the plea for refusing me. I will never commit my peace of mind by depending on such a wretch for a favour in future, so I shall never have heart to ask for holidays again. The

[1] This was just after the Westminster Election, in which Mr. Tooke was defeated.—T.

man next him in office, Cartwright, furnished him with the objections. C. LAMB.

LETTER VII. July 5, 1796.

[With verses "To Sara and her Samuel" enclosed.]

Let us prose.

What can I do till you send word what priced and placed house you should like? Islington, possibly, you would not like; to me 'tis classical ground. Knightsbridge is a desirable situation for the air of the parks. St. George's Fields is convenient for its contiguity to the Bench. Choose! But are you really coming to town? The hope of it has entirely disarmed my petty disappointment of its nettles; yet I rejoice so much on my own account, that I fear I do not feel enough pure satisfaction on yours. Why, surely, the joint editorship of the [*Morning*] *Chronicle* must be a very comfortable and secure living for a man. But should not you read French, or do you? and can you write with sufficient moderation, as 'tis called, when one suppresses the one half of what one feels or could say on a subject, to chime in the better with popular lukewarmness? White's "Letters" are near publication. Could you review 'em, or get 'em reviewed? Are you not connected with the *Critical Review?* His frontispiece is a good conceit: Sir John learning to dance to please Madame Page, in dress of doublet, &c., forms the upper half; and modern pantaloons, with shoes, &c., of the eighteenth century, form the lower half; and the whole work is full of goodly quips and rare fancies, "all deftly masqued like hoar antiquity"—much superior to Dr. Kenrick's *Falstaff's Wedding*, which you have seen. Allen

sometimes laughs at superstition, and religion, and the like. A living fell vacant lately in the gift of the Hospital: White informed him that he stood a fair chance for it. He scrupled and scrupled about it, and at last, to use his own words, "tampered" with Godwin to know whether the thing was honest or not. Godwin said nay to it, and Allen rejected the living! Could the blindest poor papist have bowed more servilely to his priest or casuist? Why sleep the *Watchman's* answers to that Godwin? I beg you will not delay to alter, if you mean to keep, those last lines I sent you. Do that, and read these for your pains:—

TO THE POET COWPER.

Cowper, I thank my God that thou art heal'd!
Thine was the sorest malady of all;
And I am sad to think that it should light
Upon thy worthy head! But thou art heal'd,
And thou art yet, we trust, the destined man,
Born to reanimate the lyre, whose chords
Have slumber'd, and have idle lain so long;
To the immortal sounding of whose strings
Did Milton frame the stately-pacèd verse;
Among whose wires with light finger playing,
Our elder bard, Spenser, a gentle name,
The lady Muses' dearest darling child,
Elicited the deftest tunes yet heard
In hall or bower, taking the delicate ear
Of Sidney and his peerless Maiden Queen.

Thou, then, take up the mighty epic strain,
Cowper, of England's Bards, the wisest and the best.

1796.

I have read your climax of praises in those three Reviews. These mighty spouters out of panegyric waters have, two of 'em, scattered their spray even upon me, and the waters are cooling and refreshing.

Prosaically, the *Monthly* reviewers have made indeed a large article of it, and done you justice. The *Critical* have, in their wisdom, selected not the very best specimens, and notice not, except as one name on the muster-roll, the *Religious Musings*. I suspect Master Dyer to have been the writer of that article, as the substance of it was the very remarks and the very language he used to me one day. I fear you will not accord entirely with my sentiments of Cowper, as *expressed* above, (perhaps scarcely just;) but the poor gentleman has just recovered from his lunacies, and that begets pity, and pity love, and love admiration; and then it goes hard with people, but they lie! Have you read the Ballad called "Leonora," in the second Number of the *Monthly Magazine?* If you have!!!! There is another fine song, from the same author (Burger), in the third Number, of scarce inferior merit; and (vastly below these) there are some happy specimens of English hexameters, in an imitation of Ossian, in the fifth Number. For your Dactyls—I am sorry you are so sore about 'em—a very Sir Fretful! In good troth, the Dactyls are good Dactyls, but their measure is naught. Be not yourself "half anger, half agony," if I pronounce your darling lines not to be the best you ever wrote—you have written much.

Have a care, good Master Poet, of the Statute *de Contumeliâ*. What do you mean by calling Madame Mara "harlot" and other naughty things?[1] The good

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[1] "I detest
These scented rooms, where, to a gaudy throng,
Heaves the proud harlot her distended breast
In intricacies of laborious song."
Lines composed in a Concert Room by S. T. C.—T.

ness of the verse would not save you in a Court of Justice. But are you really coming to town? Coleridge, a gentleman called in London lately from Bristol, and inquired whether there were any of the family of a Mr. Chambers living: this Mr. Chambers, he said, had been the making of a friend's fortune, who wished to make some return for it. He went away without seeing her. Now, a Mrs. Reynolds, a very intimate friend of ours, whom you have seen at our house, is the only daughter, and all that survives, of Mr. Chambers; and a very little supply would be of service to her, for she married very unfortunately, and has parted with her husband. Pray find out this Mr. Pember, (for that was the gentleman's friend's name:) he is an attorney, and lives at Bristol. Find him out, and acquaint him with the circumstances of the case, and offer to be the medium of supply to Mrs. Reynolds, if he chooses to make her a present. She is in very distressed circumstances. Mr. Pember, attorney, Bristol. Mr. Chambers lived in the Temple; Mrs. Reynolds, his daughter, was my schoolmistress, and is in the room at this present writing. This last circumstance induced me to write so soon again. I have not further to add. Our loves to Sara.

Thursday. C. LAMB.

LETTER VIII.] September 27th, 1796.

My dearest Friend,—White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines:—My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses: I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris, of the Blue-coat School, has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me "the former things are passed away," and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us all in His keeping!

C. LAMB.

Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please, but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

Your own judgment will convince you not to take any notice of this yet to your dear wife. You look after your family; I have my reason and strength left

to take care of mine. I charge you, don't think of coming to see me. Write. I will not see you if you come. God Almighty love you and all of us!

C. LAMB.

LETTER IX.] October 3rd, 1796.

My dearest Friend,—Your letter was an inestimable treasure to me. It will be a comfort to you, I know, to know that our prospects are somewhat brighter. My poor dear, dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgments on our house, is restored to her senses,—to a dreadful sense and recollection of what has past, awful to her mind, and impressive, (as it must be to the end of life,) but tempered with religious resignation and the reasonings of a sound judgment, which, in this early stage, knows how to distinguish between a deed committed in a transient fit of frenzy and the terrible guilt of a mother's murder. I have seen her. I found her, this morning, calm and serene; far, very far from an indecent forgetful serenity: she has a most affectionate and tender concern for what has happened. Indeed, from the beginning—frightful and hopeless as her disorder seemed—I had confidence enough in her strength of mind and religious principle, to look forward to a time when *even she* might recover tranquillity. God be praised, Coleridge! wonderful as it is to tell, I have never once been otherwise than collected and calm; even on the dreadful day, and in the midst of the terrible scene, I preserved a tranquillity which bystanders may have construed into indifference—a tranquillity not of despair. Is it folly or

sin in me to say that it was a religious principle that *most* supported me? I allow much to other favourable circumstances. I felt that I had something else to do than to regret. On that first evening my aunt was lying insensible—to all appearance like one dying; my father, with his poor forehead plaistered over from a wound he had received from a daughter, dearly loved by him, and who loved him no less dearly; my mother a dead and murdered corpse in the next room; yet was I wonderfully supported. I closed not my eyes in sleep that night, but lay without terrors and without despair. I have lost no sleep since. I had been long used not to rest in things of sense,—had endeavoured after a comprehension of mind, unsatisfied with the "ignorant present time;" and *this* kept me up. I had the whole weight of the family thrown on me; for my brother, little disposed (I speak not without tenderness for him) at any time to take care of old age and infirmities, had now, with his bad leg, an exemption from such duties, and I was now left alone. One little incident may serve to make you understand my way of managing my mind: Within a day or two after the fatal one, we dressed for dinner a tongue, which we had had salted for some weeks in the house. As I sat down, a feeling like remorse struck me: this tongue poor Mary got for me; and can I partake of it now, when she is far away? A thought occurred and relieved me:—if I give into this way of feeling, there is not a chair, a room, an object in our rooms, that will not awaken the keenest griefs. I must rise above such weaknesses. I hope this was not want of true feeling. I did not let this carry me, though, too far. On the very second day (I date from the day of horrors), as is usual in such cases, there were a matter of

twenty people, I do think, supping in our room: they prevailed on me to eat *with them* (for to eat I never refused). They were all making merry in the room! Some had come from friendship, some from busy curiosity, and some from interest. I was going to partake with them, when my recollection came that my poor dead mother was lying in the next room—the very next room;—a mother who, through life, wished nothing but her children's welfare. Indignation, the rage of grief, something like remorse, rushed upon my mind. In an agony of emotion I found my way mechanically to the adjoining room, and fell on my knees by the side of her coffin, asking forgiveness of Heaven, and sometimes of her, for forgetting her so soon. Tranquillity returned, and it was the only violent emotion that mastered me. I think it did me good.

I mention these things because I hate concealment, and love to give a faithful journal of what passes within me. Our friends have been very good. Sam Le Grice, who was then in town, was with me the first three or four days, and was as a brother to me; gave up every hour of his time, to the very hurting of his health and spirits, in constant attendance and humouring my poor father; talked with him, read to him, played at cribbage with him, (for so short is the old man's recollection, that he was playing at cards, as though nothing had happened, while the coroner's inquest was sitting over the way!) Samuel wept tenderly when he went away, for his mother wrote him a very severe letter on his loitering so long in town, and he was forced to go. Mr. Norris, of Christ's Hospital, has been as a father to me—Mrs. Norris as a mother; though we had few claims on them. A gentleman, brother to my godmother, from

whom we never had right or reason to expect any such assistance, sent my father twenty pounds; and to crown all these God's blessings to our family at such a time, an old lady, a cousin of my father and aunt's, a gentlewoman of fortune, is to take my aunt and make her comfortable for the short remainder of her days. My aunt is recovered, and as well as ever, and highly pleased at thoughts of going—and has generously given up the interest of her little money (which was formerly paid my father for her board) wholely and solely to my sister's use. Reckoning this, we have, Daddy and I, for our two selves and an old maid-servant to look after him, when I am out, which will be necessary, 170*l.* (or 180*l.* rather) a-year, out of which we can spare 50*l.* or 60*l.* at least for Mary while she stays at Islington, where she must and shall stay during her father's life, for his and her comfort. I know John will make speeches about it, but she shall not go into an hospital. The good lady of the madhouse, and her daughter, an elegant, sweet-behaved young lady, love her, and are taken with her amazingly; and I know from her own mouth she loves them, and longs to be with them as much. Poor thing, they say she was but the other morning saying, she knew she must go to Bethlem for life; that one of her brothers would have it so, but the other would wish it not, but be obliged to go with the stream; that she had often as she passed Bethlem thought it likely, "here it may be my fate to end my days," conscious of a certain flightiness in her poor head oftentimes, and mindful of more than one severe illness of that nature before. A legacy of 100*l.*, which my father will have at Christmas, and this 20*l.* I mentioned before, with what is in the house, will much

more than set us clear. If my father, an old servant-maid, and I, can't live, and live comfortably, on 130*l.* or 120*l.* a-year, we ought to burn by slow fires; and I almost would, that Mary might not go into an hospital. Let me not leave one unfavourable impression on your mind respecting my brother. Since this has happened, he has been very kind and brotherly; but I fear for his mind: he has taken his ease in the world, and is not fit himself to struggle with difficulties, nor has much accustomed himself to throw himself into their way; and I know his language is already, "Charles, you must take care of yourself: you must not abridge yourself of a single pleasure you have been used to," &c., &c., and in that style of talking. But you, a Necessarian, can respect a difference of mind, and love what *is amiable* in a character not perfect. He has been very good; but I fear for his mind. Thank God, I can unconnect myself with him, and shall manage all my father's moneys in future myself, if I take charge of Daddy, which poor John has not even hinted a wish, at any future time even, to share with me. The lady at this madhouse assures me that I may dismiss immediately both doctor and apothecary, retaining occasionally a composing draught or so for a while; and there is a less expensive establishment in her house, where she will only not have a room and nurse to herself, for 50*l.* or guineas a-year—the outside would be 60*l.* You know, by economy, how much more even I shall be able to spare for her comforts. She will I fancy, if she stays, make one of the family, rather than of the patients; and the old and young ladies I like exceedingly, and she loves them dearly; and they, as the saying is, take to her very extraordinarily, if it is extraordinary that

people who see my sister should love her. Of all the people I ever saw in the world, my poor sister was most and thoroughly devoid of the least tincture of selfishness. I will enlarge upon her qualities, poor dear, dearest soul, in a future letter, for my own comfort, for I understand her thoroughly; and, if I mistake not, in the most trying situation that a human being can be found in, she will be found—(I speak not with sufficient humility, I fear,) but, humanly and foolishly speaking, she will be found, I trust, uniformly great and amiable. God keep her in her present mind!—to whom be thanks and praise for all His dispensations to mankind. C. LAMB.

These mentioned good fortunes and change of prospects had almost brought my mind over to the extreme, the very opposite to despair. I was in danger of making myself too happy. Your letter brought me back to a view of things which I had entertained from the beginning. I hope (for Mary I can answer)—but I hope that *I* shall through life never have less recollection nor a fainter impression of what has happened than I have now. 'Tis not a light thing, nor meant by the Almighty to be received lightly. I must be serious, circumspect, and deeply religious through life; and by such means may *both* of us escape madness in future, if it so please the Almighty.

Send me word how it fares with Sara. I repeat it, your letter was, and will be, an inestimable treasure to me. You have a view of what my situation demands of me, like my own view, and I trust a just one.

Coleridge, continue to write; but do not for ever offend me by talking of sending me cash. Sincerely, and on my soul, we do not want it. God love you both!

I will write again very soon. Do you write directly.

LETTER X.] October 17th, 1796.

My dearest Friend,—I grieve from my very soul to observe you, in your plans of life, veering about from this hope to the other, and settling nowhere. Is it an untoward fatality (speaking humanly) that does this for you—a stubborn, irresistible concurrence of events? or lies the fault, as I fear it does, in your own mind? You seem to be taking up splendid schemes of fortune only to lay them down again; and your fortunes are an *ignis fatuus* that has been conducting you, in thought, from Lancaster Court, Strand, to somewhere near Matlock; then jumping across to Dr. Somebody's, whose son's tutor you were likely to be; and would to God the dancing demon *may* conduct you at last, in peace and comfort, to the "life and labours of a cottager."[1] You see, from the above awkward playfulness of fancy, that my spirits are not quite depressed. I should ill deserve God's blessings, which, since the late terrible event, have come down in mercy upon us, if I indulged regret or querulousness. Mary continues serene and cheerful. I have not by me a little letter she wrote to me; for, though I see her almost every day, yet we delight to write to one another, for we can scarce see each other but in company with some of the people of the house.

I have not the letter by me, but will quote from memory what she wrote in it: "I have no bad terrifying

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[1] These fitful schemes are set out in Coleridge's letter of Jan. 7, 1796. See *Cottle's Rem.*, 90.

dreams. At midnight, when I happen to awake, the nurse sleeping by the side of me, with the noise of the poor mad people around me, I have no fear. The spirit of my mother seems to descend and smile upon me, and bid me live to enjoy the life and reason which the Almighty has given me. I shall see her again in heaven: she will then understand me better. My grandmother, too, will understand me better, and will then say no more, as she used to do, 'Polly, what are those poor crazy moythered brains of yours thinking of always?'" Poor Mary! my mother indeed *never understood* her right. She loved her, as she loved us all, with a mother's love; but in opinion, in feeling, and sentiment, and disposition, bore so distant a resemblance to her daughter, that she never understood her right; never could believe how much *she* loved her; but met her caresses, her protestations of filial affection, too frequently with coldness and repulse. Still she was a good mother. God forbid I should think of her but *most* respectfully, *most* affectionately. Yet she would always love my brother above Mary, who was not worthy of one-tenth of that affection which Mary had a right to claim. But it is my sister's gratifying recollection that every act of duty and of love she could pay, every kindness, (and I speak true, when I say to the hurting of her health, and, most probably, in great part to the derangement of her senses,) through a long course of infirmities and sickness, she could show her, she ever did. I will, some day, as I promised, enlarge to you upon my sister's excellences: 'twill seem like exaggeration; but I will do it. At present, short letters suit my state of mind best. So take my kindest wishes for your comfort and establishment in life, and for Sara's

welfare and comforts with you! God love you! God love us all!

C. LAMB.

LETTER XI.] October 24th, 1796.

Coleridge, I feel myself much your debtor for that spirit of confidence and friendship which dictated your last letter. May your soul find peace at last in your cottage life! I only wish you were but settled. Do continue to write to me. I read your letters with my sister, and they give us both abundance of delight. Especially they please us when you talk in a religious strain: not but we are offended occasionally with a certain freedom of expression, a certain air of mysticism, more consonant to the conceits of pagan philosophy than consistent with the humility of genuine piety. To instance now, in your last letter you say, "It is by the press that God hath given finite spirits, both evil and good, (I suppose you mean *simply* bad men and good men,) a portion as it were of His Omnipresence!" Now, high as the human intellect comparatively will soar, and wide as its influence, malign or salutary, can extend, is there not, Coleridge, a distance between the Divine Mind and it, which makes such language blasphemy? Again, in your first fine consolatory epistle, you say, "you are a temporary sharer in human misery, that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine Nature." What more than this do those men say who are for exalting the man Christ Jesus into the second person of an unknown Trinity?—men whom you or I scruple not to call idolaters. Man, full of imperfections at best,

and subject to wants which momentarily remind him of dependence ; man, a weak and ignorant being, "servile" from his birth "to all the skiey influences," with eyes sometimes open to discern the right path, but a head generally too dizzy to pursue it; man, in the pride of speculation, forgetting his nature, and hailing in himself the future God, must make the angels laugh. Be not angry with me Coleridge: I wish not to cavil; I know I cannot instruct you; I only wish to remind you of that humility which best becometh the Christian character. God, in the New Testament, *(our best guide,)* is represented to us in the kind, condescending, amiable, familiar light of a *parent;* and in my poor mind 'tis best for us so to consider of him, as our *heavenly* father, and our *best friend*, without indulging too bold conceptions of his nature. Let us learn to think humbly of ourselves, and rejoice in the appellation of "dear children," "brethren," and "co-heirs with Christ of the promises," seeking to know no further.

I am not insensible, indeed I am not, of the value of that first letter of yours, and I shall find reason to thank you for it again and again, long after that blemish in it is forgotten. It will be a fine lesson of comfort to us, whenever we read it; and read it we often shall, Mary and I.

Accept our loves and best kind wishes for the welfare of yourself and wife and little one. Nor let me forget to wish you joy on your birth-day, so lately past; I thought you had been older. My kind thanks and remembrances to Lloyd.

God love us all!—and may He continue to be the father and the friend of the whole human race!

Sunday Evening. C. LAMB.

LETTER XII.] Oct. 28, 1796.

My dear friend, I am not ignorant that to be "a partaker of the Divine Nature" is a phrase to be met with in Scripture: I am only apprehensive, lest we in these latter days, tinctured (some of us perhaps pretty deeply) with mystical notions and the pride of metaphysics, might be apt to affix to such phrases a meaning, which the primitive users of them, the simple fishermen of Galilee for instance, never intended to convey. With that other part of your apology I am not quite so well satisfied. You seem to me to have been straining your comparing faculties to bring together things infinitely distant and unlike,—the feeble narrow-sphered operations of the human intellect and the everywhere diffused mind of Deity, the peerless wisdom of Jehovah. Even the expression appears to me inaccurate—"portion of Omnipresence." Omnipresence is an attribute the very essence of which is unlimitedness. How can Omnipresence be affirmed of any thing in part? But enough of this spirit of disputatiousness. Let us attend to the proper business of human life, and talk a little together respecting our domestic concerns. Do you continue to make me acquainted with what you are doing, and how soon you are likely to be settled, once for all.

I have satisfaction in being able to bid you rejoice with me in my sister's continued reason, and composedness of mind. Let us both be thankful for it. I continue to visit her very frequently, and the people of the house are vastly indulgent to her. She is likely to be as comfortably situated in all respects as those who pay twice or thrice the sum. They love her, and she loves them, and makes herself very useful to them. Benevolence sets out on her journey with a good

heart, and puts a good face on it, but is apt to limp and grow feeble, unless she calls in the aid of self-interest, by way of crutch. In Mary's case, as far as respects those she is with, 'tis well that these principles are so likely to co-operate. I am rather at a loss sometimes for books for her: our reading is somewhat confined, and we have nearly exhausted our London library. She has her hands too full of work to read much; but a little she must read, for reading was her daily bread.

Have you seen Bowles's new poem on "Hope?" What character does it bear? Has he exhausted his stores of tender plaintiveness? or is he the same in this last as in all his former pieces? The duties of the day call me off from this pleasant intercourse with my friend: so for the present adieu.

Now for the truant borrowing of a few minutes from business. Have you met with a new poem called the *Pursuits of Literature?* From the extracts in the *British Review* I judge it to be a very humourous thing. In particular I remember what I thought a very happy character of Dr. Darwin's poetry. Among all your quaint readings did you ever light upon *Walton's Complete Angler?* I asked you the question once before: it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart. There are many choice old verses interspersed in it. It would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it; it would Christianise every discordant angry passion. Pray make yourself acquainted with it. Have you made it up with Southey yet? Surely one of you two must have been a very silly fellow, and the other not much better, to fall out like boarding-school misses. Kiss, shake hands, and make it up.

When will he be delivered of his new epic? *Madoc*, I think, is to be the name of it; though that is a name not familiar to my ears. What progress do you make in your hymns? What Review are you connected with? If with any, why do you delay to notice White's book? You are justly offended at its profaneness; but surely you have undervalued its *wit*, or you would have been more loud in its praises. Do not you think that in *Slender's* death and madness there is most exquisite humour, mingled with tenderness, that is irresistible, truly Shakspearian? Be more full in your mention of it. Poor fellow, he has (very undeservedly) lost by it; nor do I see that it is likely ever to reimburse him the charge of printing, &c. Give it a lift, if you can. I suppose you know that Allen's wife is dead, and he, just situated as he was, never the better, as the worldly people say, for her death, her money with her children being taken off his hands. I am just now wondering whether you will ever come to town again, Coleridge; 'tis among the things I dare not hope, but can't help wishing. For myself, I can live in the midst of town luxury and superfluity, and not long for them, and I can't see why your children might not hereafter do the same. Remember, you are not in Arcadia when you are in the west of England, and they may catch infection from the world without visiting the metropolis. But you seem to have set your heart upon this same cottage plan; and God prosper you in the experiment! I am at a loss for more to write about; so 'tis as well that I am arrived at the bottom of my paper.

God love you, Coleridge! — Our best loves and tenderest wishes await on you, your Sara, and your little one.

C. L.

LETTER XIII.] Nov. 8, 1796

My brother, my friend,—I am distress'd for you, believe me I am; not so much for your painful, troublesome complaint, which, I trust, is only for a time, as for those anxieties which brought it on, and perhaps even now may be nursing its malignity. Tell me, dearest of my friends, is your mind at peace? or has any thing, yet unknown to me, happened to give you fresh disquiet, and steal from you all the pleasant dreams of future rest? Are you still (I fear you are) far from being comfortably settled? Would to God it were in my power to contribute towards the bringing of you into the haven where you would be! But you are too well skilled in the philosophy of consolation to need my humble tribute of advice. In pain, and in sickness, and in all manner of disappointments, I trust you have that within you which shall speak peace to your mind. Make it, I entreat you, one of your puny comforts, that I feel for you, and share all your griefs with you. I feel as if I were troubling you about *little* things, now I am going to resume the subject of our last two letters; but it may divert us both from unpleasanter feelings to make such matters, in a manner, of importance. Without further apology, then, it was not that I did not relish, that I did not in my heart thank you for those little pictures of your feelings which you lately sent me, if I neglected to mention them. You may remember you had said much the same things before to me on the same subject in a former letter, and I considered those last verses as only the identical thoughts better clothed; either way (in prose or verse) such poetry must be welcome to me. I love them as I love the Confessions

of Rousseau, and for the same reason: the same frankness, the same openness of heart, the same disclosure of all the most hidden and delicate affections of the mind. They make me proud to be thus esteemed worthy of the place of friend-confessor, brother-confessor, to a man like Coleridge. This last is, I acknowledge, language too high for friendship; but it is also, I declare, too sincere for flattery. Now, to put on stilts, and talk magnificently about trifles,—I condescend, then, to your counsel, Coleridge, and allow my first Sonnet (sick to death am I to make mention of my Sonnets, and I blush to be so taken up with them, indeed I do); I allow it to run thus: *Fairy Land*, &c. &c., as I last wrote it.

The Fragments[1] I now send you, I want printed to get rid of 'em; for, while they stick burr-like to my memory, they tempt me to go on with the idle trade of versifying, which I long (most sincerely I speak it) I long to leave off, for it is unprofitable to my soul; I feel it is; and these questions about words, and debates about alterations, take me off, I am conscious, from the properer business of my life. Take my Sonnets, once for all; and do not propose any re-amendments, or mention them again in any shape to me, I charge you. I blush that my mind can consider them as things of any worth. And, pray, admit or reject these fragments as you like or dislike them, without ceremony. Call 'em Sketches, Fragments, or

[1] In the notes to the "Poetical Works" will be found some of these variations—which become interesting from Lamb's confession in this letter.—F.

what you will; but do not entitle any of my *things* Love Sonnets, as I told you to call 'em; 'twill only make me look little in my own eyes; for it is a passion of which I retain nothing. 'Twas a weakness, concerning which I may say, in the words of Petrarch (whose Life is now open before me), "if it drew me out of some vices, it also prevented the growth of many virtues, filling me with the love of the creature rather than the Creator, which is the death of the soul." Thank God, the folly has left me for ever. Not even a review of my love verses renews one wayward wish in me; and if I am at all solicitous to trim 'em out in their best apparel, it is because they are to make their appearance in good company. Now to my fragments. Lest you have lost my "Grandame," she shall be one. 'Tis among the few verses I ever wrote: that to Mary is another, which profit me in the recollection. God love her!—and may we two never love each other less!

These, Coleridge, are the few sketches I have thought worth preserving. How will they relish thus detached? Will you reject all or any of them? They are thine: do whatsoever thou listest with them. My eyes ache with writing long and late, and I wax wondrous sleepy. God bless you and yours, me and mine! Good night. C. LAMB.

I will keep my eyes open reluctantly a minute longer to tell you that I love you for those simple, tender, heart-flowing lines with which you conclude your last, and in my eyes best, "Sonnet" (so you call 'em)—

> "So, for the mother's sake, the child was dear;
> "And dearer was the mother for the child."

Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge; or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness; for simplicity springs

spontaneous from the heart, and carries into daylight its own modest buds, and genuine, sweet, and clear flowers of expression. I allow no hot-beds in the gardens of Parnassus. I am unwilling to go to bed, and leave my sheet unfilled, (a good piece of night-work for an idle body like me,) so will finish with begging you to send me the earliest account of your complaint, its progress, or (as I hope to God you will be able to send me) the tale of your recovery, or at least amendment. My tenderest remembrances to your Sara——

Once more, Good night.

LETTER XIV.] Nov. 14, 1796.

Coleridge, I love you for dedicating your poetry to Bowles. Genius of the sacred fountain of tears, it was he who led you gently by the hand through all this valley of weeping; showed you the dark green yew trees, and the willow shades, where, by the fall of waters, you might indulge an uncomplaining melancholy, a delicious regret for the past, or weave fine visions of that awful future,

> "When all the vanities of life's brief day
> "Oblivion's hurrying hand hath swept away,
> "And all its sorrows, at the awful blast
> "Of the archangel's trump, are but as shadows past."

I have another sort of dedication in my head for my few things, which I want to know if you approve of, and can insert. I mean to inscribe them to my sister. It will be unexpected, and it will give her pleasure; or do you think it will look whimsical at all? As I have not spoke to her about it, I can easily

reject the idea. But there is a monotony in the affections, which people living together, or, as we do now, very frequently seeing each other, are apt to give in to; a sort of indifference in the expression of kindness for each other, which demands that we should sometimes call to our aid the trickery of surprise. Do you publish with Lloyd, or without him? In either case my little portion may come last; and after the fashion of orders to a country correspondent, I will give directions how I should like to have 'em done. The title-page to stand thus:—

POEMS,

BY

CHARLES LAMB, OF THE INDIA HOUSE.

Under this title the following motto, which, for want of room, I put over leaf, and desire you to insert, whether you like it or no. May not a gentleman choose what arms, mottoes, or armorial bearings the Herald will give him leave, without consulting his republican friend, who might advise none? May not a publican put up the sign of the *Saracen's Head*, even though his undiscerning neighbour should prefer, as more genteel, the *Cat and Gridiron?*

[MOTTO.]

"This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
"When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
"Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
"In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
"And all the broken sighs my sick heart lend me,
"I sued and served. Long did I love this lady."—MASSINGER.

THE DEDICATION.

THE FEW FOLLOWING POEMS,
CREATURES OF THE FANCY AND THE FEELING
IN LIFE'S MORE VACANT HOURS,
PRODUCED, FOR THE MOST PART, BY
LOVE IN IDLENESS,
ARE,
WITH ALL A BROTHER'S FONDNESS,
INSCRIBED TO
MARY ANNE LAMB,
THE AUTHOR'S BEST FRIEND AND SISTER.

This is the pomp and paraphernalia of parting, with which I take my leave of a passion which has reigned so royally (so long) within me; thus, with its trappings of laureatship, I fling it off, pleased and satisfied with myself that the weakness troubles me no longer. I am wedded, Coleridge, to the fortunes of my sister, and my poor old father. Oh, my friend! I think sometimes, could I recall the days that are past, which among them should I choose? not those "merrier days," not the "pleasant days of hope," not "those wanderings with a fair-hair'd maid," which I have so often and so feelingly regretted, but the days, Coleridge, of a *mother's* fondness for her *school-boy*. What would I give to call her back to earth for *one* day!—on my knees to ask her pardon for all those little asperities of temper which, from time to time, have given her gentle spirit pain!—and the day, my friend, I trust, will come. There will be "time enough" for kind offices of love, if "Heaven's eternal year" be ours. Hereafter, her meek spirit shall not reproach me. Oh, my friend, cultivate the filial feelings! and let no man

think himself released from the kind "charities" of relationship: these shall give him peace at the last; these are the best foundation for every species of benevolence. I rejoice to hear, by certain channels, that you, my friend, are reconciled with all your relations. 'Tis the most kindly and natural species of love, and we have all the associated train of early feelings to secure its strength and perpetuity. Send me an account of your health: *indeed* I am solicitous about you. God love you and yours. C. LAMB.

LETTER XV.] December 2, 1796.

I have delayed writing thus long, not having by me my copy of your poems, which I had lent. I am not satisfied with all your intended omissions. Why omit 40, 63, 84? Above all, let me protest strongly against your rejecting the "Complaint of Ninathoma," 86. The words, I acknowledge, are Ossian's, but you have added to them the "music of Caril." If a vicarious substitute be wanting, sacrifice (and 'twill be a piece of self-denial too), the "Epitaph on an Infant," of which its author seems so proud, so tenacious. Or, if your heart be set on *perpetuating* the four-line wonder,* I'll tell you what do; sell the copyright of it at once to a country statuary. Commence in this manner Death's prime poet-laureate; and let your

[1] This epitaph, which, notwithstanding Lamb's gentle banter, occupied an entire page in the Book, is curious—"a miracle instead of wit"—for it *is* a *common-place* of Coleridge, who, investing ordinary things with a dreamy splendour, or weighing them down with accumulated thought, has rarely, if ever, written a stanza so smoothly vapid—so devoid of merit or offence—(unless it be an offence to make *fade* do duty as a verb active) as the lines: Ere sin could blight, &c.—T.

verses be adopted in every village round, instead of those hitherto famous ones :—

> "Afflictions sore long time I bore;
> "Physicians were in vain."

I have seen your last very beautiful poem in the *Monthly Magazine:* write thus, and you most generally have written thus, and I shall never quarrel with you about simplicity. With regard to my lines—

> "Laugh all that weep," &c.,

I would willingly sacrifice them; but my portion of the volume is so ridiculously little, that, in honest truth, I can't spare 'em. As things are, I have very slight pretensions to participate in the title-page. White's book is at length reviewed in the *Monthly;* was it your doing, or Dyer's, to whom I sent him?—or, rather, do you not write in the *Critical?*—for I observed, in an article of this month's, a line quoted out of that Sonnet on Mrs. Siddons,

> "With eager wondering, and perturb'd delight."

And a line from *that* Sonnet would not readily have occurred to a stranger. That sonnet, Coleridge, brings afresh to my mind the time when you wrote those on Bowles, Priestley, Burke;—'twas two Christmases ago, and in that nice little smoky room at the *Salutation*, which is even now continually presenting itself to my recollection, with all its associated train of pipes, tobacco, egg-hot, welsh-rabbit, metaphysics, and poetry.—Are we *never* to meet again? How differently I am circumstanced now! I have never met with any one—never shall meet with any one—who could or can compensate me for the loss of your

society. I have no one to talk all these matters about to; I lack friends. I lack books to supply their absence: but these complaints ill become me. Let me compare my present situation, prospects, and state of mind, with what they were but two months back—but two months! O my friend, I am in danger of forgetting the awful lessons then presented to me! Remind me of them; remind me of my duty! Talk seriously with me when you do write! I thank you, from my heart I thank you, for your solicitude about my sister. She is quite well, but must not, I fear, come to live with us yet a good while. In the first place, because, at present, it would hurt her, and hurt my father, for them to be together: secondly, from a regard to the world's good report; for, I fear, tongues will be busy whenever that event takes place. Some have hinted, one man has pressed it on me, that she should be in perpetual confinement: what she hath done to deserve, or the necessity of such an hardship, I see not; do you? I am starving at the India House,—near seven o'clock without my dinner; and so it has been, and will be, almost all the week. I get home at night o'erwearied, quite faint, and then to cards with my father, who will not let me enjoy a meal in peace; but I must conform to my situation; and I hope I am, for the most part, not unthankful.

I am got home at last, and, after repeated games at cribbage, have got my father's leave to write awhile, with difficulty got it, for when I expostulated about playing any more, he very aptly replied, "If you won't play with me, you might as well not come home at all." The argument was unanswerable, and I set to afresh. I told you I do not approve of your

omissions; neither do I quite coincide with you in your arrangements. I have not time to point out a better, and I suppose some self-associations of your own have determined their place as they now stand. Your beginning, indeed, with the *Joan of Arc* lines I coincide entirely with. I love a splendid outset—a magnificent portico; and the diapason is grand. When I read the *Religious Musings*, I think how poor, how unelevated, unoriginal, my blank verse is—"Laugh all that weep," especially, where the subject demanded a grandeur of conception; and I ask what business they have among yours? but friendship covereth a multitude of defects. I want some loppings made in the "Chatterton:" it wants but a little to make it rank among the finest irregular lyrics I ever read. Have you time and inclination to go to work upon it?—or is it too late?—or do you think it needs none? Don't reject those verses in your *Watchman*, "Dear native brook," &c.; nor I think those last lines you sent me, in which "all effortless" is without doubt to be preferred to "inactive." If I am writing more than ordinarily dully, 'tis that I am stupified with a tooth-ache. Hang it! do not omit 48, 52, and 53: what you do retain, though, call Sonnets, for heaven's sake, and not Effusions. Spite of your ingenious anticipation of ridicule in your Preface, the last five lines of 50 are too good to be lost; the rest are not much worth. My tooth becomes importunate: I must finish. Pray, pray, write to me: if you knew with what an anxiety of joy I open such a long packet as you last sent me, you would not grudge giving a few minutes now and then to this intercourse (the only intercourse I fear we two shall ever have)—this conversation with your friend: such I boast to

be called. God love you and yours! Write to me when you move, lest I should direct wrong. Has Sara no poems to publish? Those lines, 129, are probably too light for the volume where the *Religious Musings* are; but I remember some very beautiful lines, addressed by somebody at Bristol to somebody in London. God bless you once more. *Thursday Night.*

C. LAMB.

LETTER XVI.] [Fragment.] Dec. 5, 1796.[1]

At length I have done with verse-making; not that I relish other people's poetry less: their's comes from 'em without effort; mine is the difficult operation of a brain scanty of ideas, made more difficult by disuse. I have been reading "The Task" with fresh delight. I am glad you love Cowper. I could forgive a man for not enjoying Milton; but I would not call that man my friend who should be offended with the "divine chit-chat of Cowper." Write to me, God love you and yours! C. L.

LETTER XVII.] Dec. 10, 1796.

I had put my letter into the post rather hastily, not expecting to have to acknowledge another from you so soon. This morning's present has made me

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[1] With this letter Lamb transmitted to Coleridge two poems for the volume—one a copy of verses "To a Young Lady going out to India," which were not inserted, and are not worthy of preservation; the other, entitled, "The Tomb of Douglas," which was inserted, and which he chiefly valued as a memorial of his impression of Mrs. Siddons's acting in *Lady Randolph*.—T.

alive again My last night's epistle was childishly querulous; but you have put a little life into me, and I will thank you for your remembrance of me, while my sense of it is yet warm; for if I linger a day or two I may use the same phrase of acknowledgment, or similar, but the feeling that dictates it now will be gone. I shall send you a *caput mortuum*, not a *cor vivens*. Thy *Watchman's*, thy bellman's verses, I do retort upon thee, thou libellous varlet! Why you cried the hours yourself, and who made you so proud! But I submit, to show my humility most implicitly to your dogmas. I reject entirely the copy of verses you reject. With regard to my leaving off versifying, you have said so many pretty things, so many fine compliments, ingeniously decked out in the garb of sincerity, and undoubtedly springing from a present feeling somewhat like sincerity, that you might melt the most un-muse-ical soul—did you not (now for a Rowland compliment for your profusion of Olivers!) did you not in your very epistle, by the many pretty fancies and profusion of heart displayed in it, dissuade and discourage me from attempting any thing after you. At present I have not leisure to make verses, nor any thing approaching to a fondness for the exercise. In the ignorant present time, who can answer for the future man? "At lovers' perjuries Jove laughs;" and poets have sometimes a disingenuous way of forswearing their occupation. This though is not my case. The tender cast of soul, sombred with melancholy and subsiding recollections, is favourable to the Sonnet or the Elegy; but from

> "The sainted growing woof
> "The teasing troubles keep aloof."

The music of poesy may charm for a while the im-

portunate teasing cares of life; but the teased and troubled man is not in a disposition to make that music.

You sent me some very sweet lines relative to Burns, but it was at a time when in my highly agitated and perhaps somewhat distorted state of mind I thought it a duty to read 'em hastily and burn 'em. I burned all my own verses; all my book of extracts from Beaumont and Fletcher and a thousand sources; I burned a little journal of my foolish passion which I had a long time kept—

> "Noting ere they past away
> "The little lines of yesterday."[1]

I almost burned all your letters,—I did as bad, I lent 'em to a friend to keep out of my brother's sight, should he come and make inquisition into our papers; for, much as he dwelt upon your conversation while you were among us, and delighted to be with you, it has been his fashion ever since to depreciate and cry you down: you were the cause of my madness—you and your "damned foolish sensibility and melancholy;" and he lamented, with a true brotherly feeling, that we ever met; even as the sober citizen, when his son went astray upon the mountains of Parnassus, is said to have "cursed Wit and Poetry and Pope." I quote wrong, but no matter. These letters I lent to a friend to be out of the way for a season; but I have claimed 'em in vain, and shall not cease to regret their loss Your packets, posterior to the date of my misfortunes, commencing with that valuable consolatory epistle,

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[1] This appears to be the earliest allusion to a topic, of which more hereafter.

are every day accumulating: they are sacred things with me.

Publish your Burns when and how you like, itwill be new to me: my memory of it is very confused, and tainted with unpleasant associations. Burns was the god of my idolatry, as Bowles is of yours. I am jealous of your fraternising with Bowles, when I think you relish him more than Burns, or my old favourite, Cowper. But you conciliate matters when you talk of the "divine chit-chat" of the latter: by that expression I see you thoroughly relish him. I love Mrs. Coleridge for her excuses an hundredfold more dearly than if she heaped "line upon line," out-Hannah-ing Hannah More; and would rather hear you sing "Did a very little baby," by your family fire-side, than listen to you when you were repeating one of Bowles's sweetest sonnets, in your sweet manner, while we two were indulging sympathy, a solitary luxury, by the fire-side at the *Salutation*. Yet have I no higher ideas of heaven. Your company was one "cordial in this melancholy vale:" the remembrance of it is a blessing partly, and partly a curse. When I can abstract myself from things present, I can enjoy it with a freshness of relish; but it more constantly operates to an unfavourable comparison with the uninteresting converse I always and *only* can partake in. Not a soul loves Bowles here; scarce one has heard of Burns; few but laugh at me for reading my Testament. They talk a language I understand not. I conceal sentiments that would be a puzzle to them. I can only converse with you by letter, and with the dead in their books. My sister, indeed, is all I can wish in a companion; but our spirits are alike poorly, our reading and knowledge from the self-same sources;

our communication with the scenes of the world alike narrow. Never having kept separate company, or any 'company' '*together*'—never having read separate books, and few books *together*—what knowledge have we to convey to each other? In our little range of duties and connexions, how few sentiments can take place, without friends, with few books, with a taste for religion, rather than a strong religious habit! We need some support, some leading-strings to cheer and direct us. You talk very wisely; and be not sparing of *your advice*. Continue to remember us, and to show us you do remember us: we will take as lively an interest in what concerns you and yours. All I can add to your happiness will be sympathy: you can add to mine *more*, you can teach me wisdom. I am indeed an unreasonable correspondent; but I was unwilling to let my last night's letter go off without this qualifier: you will perceive by this my mind is easier, and you will rejoice. I do not expect or wish you to write till you are moved; and, of course, shall not, till you announce to me that event, think of writing myself. Love to Mrs. Coleridge and David Hartley, and my kind remembrance to Lloyd, if he is with you.

C. LAMB.

I will get *Nature and Art:* have not seen it yet, nor any of Jeremy Taylor's works.

LETTER XVIII.] Jan. 2, 1797.

If the fraternal sentiment conveyed in the following lines will atone for the total want of any thing like merit or genius in it, I desire you will print it next after my other Sonnet to my Sister.

> Friend of my earliest years and childish days,
> My joys, my sorrows, thou with me hast shared,
> Companion dear; &c.

This has been a sad long letter of business, with no room in it for what honest Bunyan terms heart-work. I have just room left to congratulate you on your removal to Stowey; to wish success to all your projects; to "bid fair peace" be to that house; to send my love and best wishes, breathed warmly, after your dear Sara, and her little David Hartley. If Lloyd be with you, bid him write to me: I feel to whom I am obliged primarily for two very friendly letters I have received already from him. A dainty sweet book that *Nature and Art* is. I am at present re-re-reading Priestley's Examination of the Scotch Doctors: how the rogue strings 'em up! three together! You have no doubt read that clear, strong, humorous, most entertaining piece of reasoning. If not, procure it, and be exquisitely amused. I wish I could get more of Priestley's works. Can you recommend me to any more books, easy of access, such as circulating shops afford? God bless you and yours.

Monday Morning, at Office.

Poor Mary is very unwell with a sore throat and a slight species of scarlet fever. God bless her too.

LETTER XIX.] Jan. 5, 1797.

Sunday Morning.—You cannot surely mean to degrade the Joan of Arc into a pot-girl. You are not going, I hope, to annex to that most splendid ornament of Southey's poem all this cock-and-a-bull story of Joan, the publican's daughter of Neufchatel, with the lamentable episode of a waggoner, his wife, and six children. The texture will be most lamentably disproportionate. The first forty or fifty lines of these addenda are, no doubt, in their way, admirable, too; but many would prefer the Joan of Southey.

> "On mightiest deeds to brood
> Of shadowy vastness, such as made my heart
> Throb fast; anon I paused, and in a state
> Of half expectance listen'd to the wind;"
>
> "They wonder'd at me, who had known me once
> A cheerful careless damsel;"
>
> "The eye,
> That of the circling throng and of the visible world
> Unseeing, saw the shapes of holy phantasy;'

I see nothing in your description of the Maid equal to these. There is a fine originality certainly in those lines—

> "For she had lived in this bad world
> As in a place of tombs,
> And touch'd not the pollutions of the dead;"

but your "fierce vivacity" is a faint copy of the "fierce and terrible benevolence" of Southey; added to this, that it will look like rivalship in you, and extort a

comparison with Southey,—I think to your disadvantage. And the lines, considered in themselves as an addition to what you had before written, (strains of a far higher mood,) are but such as Madame Fancy loves in some of her more familiar moods, at such times as she has met Noll Goldsmith, and walked and talked with him, calling him "old acquaintance." Southey certainly has no pretensions to vie with you in the sublime of poetry; but he tells a plain tale better than you. I will enumerate some woful blemishes, some of 'em sad deviations from that simplicity which was your aim. "Hail'd who might be near" (the "canvas-coverture moving," by the by, is laughable); "a woman and six children" (by the way,—why not nine children? It would have been just half as pathetic again): "statues of sleep they seem'd": "frost-mangled wretch": "green putridity": "hail'd him immortal" (rather ludicrous again): "voiced a sad and simple tale" (abominable!): "unprovender'd": "such his tale": "Ah! suffering to the height of what was suffer'd" (a most *insufferable line*): "amazements of affright": "the hot sore brain attributes its own hues of ghastliness and torture" (what shocking confusion of ideas)!

In these delineations of common and natural feelings, in the familiar walks of poetry, you seem to resemble Montauban dancing with Roubigné's tenants "*much of his native loftiness remained in the execution.*"

I was reading your *Religious Musings* the other day, and sincerely I think it the noblest poem in the language, next after the *Paradise Lost;* and even that was not made the vehicle of such grand truths. "There is one mind," &c., down to "Almighty's throne," are without a rival in the whole compass of my poetical reading.

"Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
"Views all creation."

I wish I could have written those lines. I rejoice that I am able to relish them. The loftier walks of Pindus are your proper region. There you have no compeer in modern times. Leave the lowlands, unenvied, in possession of such men as Cowper and Southey. Thus am I pouring balsam into the wounds I may have been inflicting on my poor friend's vanity.

In your notice of Southey's new volume you omit to mention the most pleasing of all, the "Miniature"—

"There were
Who form'd high hopes and flattering ones of thee
Young Robert,
Spirit of Spenser!— was the wanderer wrong?"

Fairfax I have been in quest of a long time. Johnson, in his "Life of Waller," gives a most delicious specimen of him, and adds, in the true manner of that delicate critic, as well as amiable man, "It may be presumed that this old version will not be much read after the elegant translation of my friend, Mr. Hoole." I endeavoured—I wished to gain some idea of Tasso from this Mr. Hoole, the great boast and ornament of the India House, but soon desisted. I found him more vapid than smallest small beer "sun-vinegared." Your "Dream," down to that exquisite line—

"I can't tell half his adventures,"

is a most happy resemblance of Chaucer. The remainder is so so. The best line, I think, is, "He belong'd, I believe, to the witch Melancholy." By the

way, when will our volume come out? Don't delay it till you have written a new Joan of Arc. Send what letters you please by me, and in any way you choose, single or double. The India Company is better adapted to answer the cost than the generality of my friend's correspondents,—such poor and honest dogs as John Thelwall, particularly. I cannot say I know Colson, at least intimately. I once supped with him and Allen: I think his manners very pleasing. I will not tell you what I think of Lloyd, for he may by chance come to see this letter, and that thought puts a restraint on me. I cannot think what subject would suit your epic genius; some philosophical subject, I conjecture, in which shall be blended the sublime of poetry and of science. Your proposed "Hymns" will be a fit preparatory study wherewith "to discipline your young noviciate soul." I grow dull; I'll go walk myself out of my dullness.

Sunday Night.—You and Sara are very good to think so kindly and so favourably of poor Mary; I would to God all did so too. But I very much fear she must not think of coming home in my father's lifetime. It is very hard upon her; but our circumstances are peculiar, and we must submit to them. God be praised she is so well as she is. She bears her situation as one who has no right to complain. My poor old aunt, whom you have seen, the kindest, goodest creature to me when I was at school; who used to toddle there to bring me good things, when I, schoolboy like, only despised her for it, and used to be ashamed to see her come and sit herself down on the old coal-hole steps as you went into the old grammar-school, and open her apron, and bring out her bason,

with some nice thing she had caused to be saved for me; the good old creature is now lying on her death-bed. I cannot bear to think on her deplorable state. To the shock she received on that our evil day, from which she never completely recovered, I impute her illness. She says, poor thing, she is glad she is come home to die with me. I was always her favourite:

> "No after friendship e'er can raise
> The endearments of our early days,
> Nor e'er the heart such fondness prove,
> As when it first began to love."

Lloyd has kindly left me, for a keep-sake, *John Woolman*. You have read it, he says, and like it. Will you excuse one short extract? I think it could not have escaped you:—"Small treasure to a resigned mind is sufficient. How happy is it to be content with a little, to live in humility, and feel *that* in us, which breathes out this language—Abba! Father!" ——I am almost ashamed to patch up a letter in this miscellaneous sort; but I please myself in the thought, that any thing from me will be acceptable to you. I am rather impatient, childishly so, to see our names affixed to the same common volume. Send me two, when it does come out; two will be enough—or indeed one—but two better. I have a dim recollection that, when in town, you were talking of the Origin of Evil as a most prolific subject for a long poem. Why not adopt it, Coleridge?—there would be room for imagination. Or the description (from a Vision or Dream, suppose) of an Utopia in one of the planets (the Moon for instance). Or a Five Days' Dream, hich shall illustrate, in sensible imagery, Hartley's

five Motives to Conduct:—1. Sensation; 2. Imagination; 3. Ambition; 4. Sympathy; 5. Theopathy:—*First.* Banquets, music, &c., effeminacy,—and their insufficiency. *Second.* "Beds of hyacinth and roses, where young Adonis oft reposes;" "Fortunate Isles;" "The pagan Elysium," &c.; poetical pictures; antiquity as pleasing to the fancy;—their emptiness; madness, &c. *Third.* Warriors, Poets; some famous yet more forgotten; their fame or oblivion now alike indifferent; pride, vanity, &c. *Fourth.* All manner of pitiable stories, in Spenser-like verse; love; friendship, relationship, &c. *Fifth.* Hermits; Christ and his apostles; martyrs; heaven, &c. An imagination like yours, from these scanty hints, may expand into a thousand great ideas, if indeed you at all comprehend my scheme, which I scarce do myself.

Monday Morn.—"A London letter — Ninepence halfpenny!" Look you, master poet, I have remorse as well as another man, and my bowels can sound upon occasion. But I must put you to this charge, for I cannot keep back my protest, however ineffectual, against the annexing your latter lines to those former —this putting of new wine into old bottles. This my duty done, I will cease from writing till you invent some more reasonable mode of conveyance. Well may the "ragged followers of the Nine" set up for flocci-nauci-what-do-you-call-'em-ists! and I do not wonder that in their splendid visions of Utopias in America they protest against the admission of those *yellow*-complexioned, *copper*-coloured, *white*-livered gentlemen, who never proved themselves their friends. Don't you think your verses on a "Young Ass" too trivial a companion for the "Religious Musings?"—"Scoundrel monarch," alter that; and the "Man of

Ross" is scarce admissible, as it now stands, curtailed of its fairer half: reclaim its property from the "Chatterton," which it does but encumber, and it will be a rich little poem. I hope you expunge great part of the old notes in the new edition: that, in particular, most barefaced, unfounded, impudent assertion, that Mr. Rogers is indebted for his story to *Loch Lomond*, a poem by Bruce! I have read the latter. I scarce think you have. Scarce any thing is common to them both. The poor author of the *Pleasures of Memory* was sorely hurt, Dyer says, by the accusation of unoriginality. He never saw the poem. I long to read your poem on Burns; I retain so indistinct a memory of it. In what shape and how does it come into public? As you leave off writing poetry till you finish your Hymns, I suppose you print, now, all you have got by you. You have scarce enough unprinted to make a second volume with Lloyd. Tell me all about it. What is become of Cowper? Lloyd told me of some verses on his mother. If you have them by you, pray send 'em me. I do so love him! Never mind their merit. May be *I* may like 'em, as your taste and mine do not always exactly *identify*. Yours,

C. LAMB.

LETTER XX.] Jan. 10, 1797.

I need not repeat my wishes to have my little sonnets printed *verbatim* my last way. In particular, I fear lest you should prefer printing my first sonnet, as you have done more than once, "Did the wand of Merlin wave?" It looks so like *Mr.* Merlin, the ingenious successor of the immortal Merlin, now living in good health and spirits, and flourishing in magical

reputation, in Oxford Street; and, on my life, one half who read it would understand it so. Do put 'em forth, finally, as I have in various letters settled it; for first a man's self is to be pleased, and then his friends; and, of course, the greater number of his friends, if they differ *inter se*. Thus taste may safely be put to the vote. I do long to see our names together; not for vanity's sake, and naughty pride of heart altogether, for not a living soul I know, or am intimate with, will scarce read the book: so I shall gain nothing, *quoad famam;* and yet there is a little vanity mixes in it, I cannot help denying. I am aware of the unpoetical cast of the six last lines of my last sonnet, and think myself unwarranted in smuggling so tame a thing into the book; only the sentiments of those six lines are thoroughly congenial to me in my state of mind, and I wisn to accumulate perpetuating tokens of my affection to poor Mary. That it has no originality in its cast, nor any thing in the feelings but what is common and natural to thousands, nor ought properly to be called poetry, I see; still it will tend to keep present to my mind a view of things which I ought to indulge. These six lines, too, have not, to a reader, a connectedness with the foregoing.' Omit it, if you like.—What a treasure it is to my poor, indolent, and unemployed mind, thus to lay hold on a subject to talk about, though 'tis but a sonnet, and that of the lowest order! How mournfully inactive I am!—'Tis night: Good night.

My sister, I thank God, is nigh recovered: she was seriously ill. Do, in your next letter, and that right soon, give me some satisfaction respecting your present situation at Stowey. Is it a farm you have got? And what does your worship know about farming?

Coleridge, I want you to write an epic poem. Nothing short of it can satisfy the vast capacity of true poetic genius. Having one great end to direct all your poetical faculties to, and on which to lay out your hopes, your ambition will show you to what you are equal. By the sacred energies of Milton! by the dainty, sweet, and soothing phantasies of honey-tongued Spenser! I adjure you to attempt the epic, or do something more ample than writing an occasional brief ode or sonnet; something, "to make yourself for ever known,—to make the age to come your own." But I prate; doubtless you meditate something. When you are exalted among the lords of epic fame, I shall recall with pleasure, and exultingly, the days of your humility, when you disdained not to put forth, in the same volume with mine, your *Religious Musings* and that other poem from the *Joan of Arc*, those promising first-fruits of high renown to come. You have learning, you have fancy, you have enthusiasm, you have strength, and amplitude of wing enow for flights like those I recommend. In the vast and unexplored regions of fairy-land there is ground enough unfound and uncultivated: search there, and realise your favourite Susquehannah scheme. In all our comparisons of taste, I do not know whether I have ever heard your opinion of a poet, very dear to me,—the now-out-of-fashion Cowley. Favour me with your judgment of him, and tell me if his prose essays, in particular, as well as no inconsiderable part of his verse, be not delicious. I prefer the graceful rambling of his essays, even to the courtly elegance and ease of Addison; abstracting from this the latter's exquisite humour.

When the little volume is printed, send me three

or four, at all events not more than six copies, and tell me if I put you to any additional expense, by printing with you. I have no thought of the kind, and in that case must reimburse you.

Priestley, whom I sin in almost adoring, speaks of "such a choice of company as tends to keep up that right bent and firmness of mind which a necessary intercourse with the world would otherwise warp and relax." "Such fellowship is the true balsam of life; its cement is infinitely more durable than that of the friendships of the world; and it looks for its proper fruit and complete gratification to the life beyond the grave." Is there a possible chance for such an one as I to realise in this world such friendships? Where am I to look for 'em? What testimonials shall I bring of my being worthy of such friendship? Alas! the great and good go together in separate herds, and leave such as I to lag far, far behind in all intellectual, and, far more grievous to say, in all moral accomplishments. Coleridge, I have not one truly elevated character among my acquaintance: not one Christian: not one but undervalues Christianity. Singly, what am I to do? Wesley, (have you read his life?) was *he* not an elevated character? Wesley has said, "Religion is not a solitary thing." Alas! it necessarily is so with me, or next to solitary. 'Tis true you write to me; but correspondence by letter, and personal intimacy, are very widely different. Do, do write to me, and do some good to my mind, already how much "warped and relaxed" by the world! 'Tis the conclusion of another evening. Good night. God have us all in his keeping!

If you are sufficiently at leisure, oblige me with an account of your plan of life at Stowey—your literary

occupations and prospects; in short, make me acquainted with every circumstance which, as relating to you, can be interesting to me. Are you yet a Berkleyan? Make me one. I rejoice in being, speculatively, a Necessarian. Would to God, I were habitually a practical one! Confirm me in the faith of that great and glorious doctrine, and keep me steady in the contemplation of it. You some time since expressed an intention you had of finishing some extensive work on the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion. Have you let that intention go? Or are you doing any thing towards it? Make to yourself other ten talents. My letter is full of nothingness. I talk of nothing. But I must talk. I love to write to you. I take a pride in it. It makes me think less meanly of myself. It makes me think myself not totally disconnected from the better part of mankind. I know I am too dissatisfied with the beings around me; but I cannot help occasionally exclaiming, "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!" I know I am noways better in practice than my neighbours, but I have a taste for religion, an occasional earnest aspiration after perfection, which they have not. I gain nothing by being with such as myself: we encourage one another in mediocrity. I am always longing to be with men more excellent than myself. All this must sound odd to you; but these are my predominant feelings when I sit down to write to you, and I should put force upon my mind were I to reject them. Yet I rejoice, and feel my privilege with gratitude, when I have been reading some wise book, such as I have just been reading, *Priestley on Philosophical Necessity*, in the thought that I enjoy a kind

of communion, a kind of friendship even, with the great and good. Books are to me instead of friends. I wish they did not resemble the latter in their scarceness.

And how does little David Hartley? "*Ecquid in antiquam virtutem?*" Does his mighty name work wonders yet upon his little frame and opening mind? I did not distinctly understand you: you don't mean to make an actual ploughman of him! Is Lloyd with you yet? Are you intimate with Southey? What poems is he about to publish? He hath a most prolific brain, and is indeed a most sweet poet. But how can you answer all the various mass of interrogation I have put to you in the course of this sheet? Write back just what you like, only write something, however brief. I have now nigh finished my page, and got to the end of another evening (Monday evening), and my eyes are heavy and sleepy, and my brain unsuggestive. I have just heart enough awake to say good night once more, and God love you, my dear friend; God love us all! Mary bears an affectionate remembrance of you. CHARLES LAMB.

LETTER XXI.] January 16, 1797.

Dear C———,—You have learned by this time, with surprise, no doubt, that Lloyd is with me in town. The emotions I felt on his coming so unlooked for, are not ill expressed in what follows, and what (if you do not object to them as too personal, and to the world obscure, or otherwise wanting in worth,) I should wish to make a part of our little volume. I shall be sorry if that volume comes out, as it necessarily must

do, unless you print those very schoolboy-ish verses I sent you on not getting leave to come down to Bristol last Summer. I say I shall be sorry that I have addressed you in nothing which can appear in our joint volume; so frequently, so habitually, as you dwell in my thoughts, 'tis some wonder those thoughts came never yet in contact with a poetical mood. But you dwell in my heart of hearts, and I love you in all the naked honesty of prose. God bless you, and all your little domestic circle! My tenderest remembrances to your beloved Sara, and a smile and a kiss from me to your dear dear little David Hartley. The verses I refer to above, slightly amended, I have sent (forgetting to ask your leave, tho' indeed I gave them only your initials,) to the *Monthly Magazine*, where they may possibly appear next month, and where I hope to recognise your poem on Burns. [Here follow the verses to C. Lloyd "To an Unexpected Visitor."]

O Coleridge, would to God you were in London with us, or we two at Stowey with you all! Lloyd takes up his abode at the *Bull and Mouth;* the *Cat and Salutation* would have had a charm more forcible for me. *O noctes cœnæque Deum!* Anglice—Welsh rabbit, punch, and poesy. Should you be induced to publish those very schoolboy-ish verses, print 'em as they will occur, if at all, in the *Monthly Magazine;* yet I should feel ashamed that to you I wrote nothing better: but they are too personal, and almost trifling and obscure withal. Some lines of mine to Cowper were in the last *Monthly Magazine:* they have not body of thought enough to plead for the retaining of 'em. My sister's kind love to you all.

C. Lamb.

LETTER XXI. *b.*]

In truth, Coleridge, I am perplexed, and at times almost cast down. I am beset with perplexities. The old hag of a wealthy relation who took my aunt off our hands in the beginning of trouble, has found out that she is "indolent and mulish"—I quote her own words, and that her attachment to us is so strong that she can never be happy apart. The lady, with delicate irony, remarks, that if I am not an hypocrite, I shall rejoice to receive her again; and that it will be a means of making me more fond of home to have so dear a friend to come home to! The fact is, she is jealous of my aunt's bestowing any kind recollections on us while she enjoys the patronage of her roof. She says she finds it inconsistent with her own "ease and tranquillity," to keep her any longer; and, in fine, summons me to fetch her home. Now much as I should rejoice to transplant the poor old creature from the chilling air of such patronage, yet I know how straitened we are already, how unable already to answer any demand which sickness or any extraordinary expense may make. I know this; and all unused as I am to struggle with perplexities, I am somewhat nonplussed, to say no worse. This prevents me from a thorough relish of what Lloyd's kindness and yours have furnished me with. I thank you though from my heart, and feel myself not quite alone in the earth.

C. LAMB.

LETTER XXII.] February 13th, 1797.

Your poem is altogether admirable: parts of it are even exquisite; in particular your personal account

of the Maid far surpasses any thing of the sort in Southey. I perceived all its excellences, on a first reading, as readily as now you have been removing a supposed film from my eyes. I was only struck with a certain faulty disproportion, in the matter and the *style*, which I still think I perceive, between these lines and the former ones. I had an end in view: I wished to make you reject the poem only as being discordant with the other; and, in subservience to that end, it was politically done in me to over-pass and make no mention of merit, which, could you think me capable of *overlooking*, might reasonably damn for ever in your judgment all pretensions, in me, to be critical. There—I will be judged by Lloyd, whether I have not made a very handsome recantation. I was in the case of a man whose friend has asked him his opinion of a certain young lady. The deluded wight gives judgment against her *in toto*—doesn't like her face, her walk, her manners; finds fault with her eyebrows; can see no wit in her. His friend looks blank; he begins to smell a rat; wind veers about; he acknowledges her good sense, her judgment in dress, a certain simplicity of manners and honesty of heart, something too in her manners which gains upon you after a short acquaintance; and then her accurate pronunciation of the French language, and a pretty uncultivated taste in drawing. The reconciled gentleman smiles applause, squeezes him by the hand, and hopes he will do him the honour of taking a bit of dinner with Mrs. —— and him,—a plain family dinner,—some day next week; "for, I suppose, you never heard we were married. I'm glad to see you like my wife, however; you'll come and see her, ha?" Now am I too proud to retract entirely?

Yet I do perceive I am in some sort straitened. You are manifestly wedded to this poem; and what fancy has joined let no man separate. I turn me to the *Joan of Arc*, second book.

The solemn openings of it are with sounds which, Lloyd would say, "are silence to the mind." The deep preluding strains are fitted to initiate the mind, with a pleasing awe, into the sublimest mysteries of theory concerning man's nature, and his noblest destination—the philosophy of a first cause—of subordinate agents in creation, superior to man — the subserviency of Pagan worship and Pagan faith to the introduction of a purer and more perfect religion, which you so elegantly describe as winning, with gradual steps, her difficult way northward from Bethabara. After all this cometh Joan, a *publican's* daughter, sitting on an ale-house *bench*, and marking the *swingings* of the *signboard*, finding a poor man, his wife, and six children, starved to death with cold, and thence roused into a state of mind proper to receive visions, emblematical of equality; which, what the devil Joan had to do with, I don't know, or indeed with the French and American revolutions; though that needs no pardon, it is executed so nobly. After all, if you perceive no disproportion, all argument is vain: I do not so much object to parts. Again, when you talk of building your fame on these lines in preference to the *Religious Musings*, I cannot help conceiving of you, and of the author of that, as two different persons, and I think you a very vain man.

I have been re-reading your letter. Much of it I *could* dispute; but with the latter part of it, in which you compare the two Joans with respect to their pre-

dispositions for fanaticism, I, *toto corde*, coincide; only I think that Southey's strength rather lies in the description of the emotions of the Maid under the weight of inspiration. These (I see no mighty difference between *her* describing them or *your* describing them), these if you only equal, the previous admirers of his poem, as is natural, will prefer his. If you surpass, prejudice will scarcely allow it, and I scarce think you will surpass, though your specimen at the conclusion (I am in earnest) I think very nigh equals them. And in an account of a fanatic or of a prophet, the description of her *emotions* is expected to be most highly finished. By the way, I spoke far too disparagingly of your lines, and I am ashamed to say, purposely. I should like you to specify or particularize. The story of the "Tottering Eld," of "his eventful years all come and gone," is too general. Why not make him a soldier, or some character, however, in which he has been witness to frequency of "cruel wrong and strange distress!" I think I should. When I laughed at the "miserable man crawling from beneath the coverture," I wonder I did not perceive that it was a laugh of horror—such as I have laughed at Dante's picture of the famished Ugolino. Without falsehood, I perceive an hundred beauties in your narrative. Yet I wonder you do not perceive something out-of-the-way, something unsimple and artificial, in the expression "voiced a sad tale." I hate made-dishes at the muses' banquet. I believe I was wrong in most of my other objections. But surely "hailed him immortal," adds nothing to the terror of the man's death, which it was your business to heighten, not diminish by a phrase which takes away all terror from it. I like that line, "They

closed their eyes in sleep, nor knew 'twas death." Indeed there is scarce a line I do not like. "*Turbid* ecstacy," is surely not so good as what you *had* written, "troublous." "Turbid" rather suits the muddy kind of inspiration which London porter confers. The versification is, throughout, to my ears unexceptionable, with no disparagement to the measure of the *Religious Musings*, which is exactly fitted to the thoughts.

You were building your house on a rock when you rested your fame on that poem. I can scarce bring myself to believe that I am admitted to a familiar correspondence, and all the licence of friendship, with a man who writes blank verse like Milton. Now, this is delicate flattery, *indirect* flattery. Go on with your *Maid of Orleans*, and be content to be second to yourself. I shall become a convert to it when 'tis finished.

This afternoon I attend the funeral of my poor old aunt, who died on Thursday. I own I am thankful that the good creature has ended all her days of suffering and infirmity. She was to me the "cherisher of infancy," and one must fall on those occasions into reflections, which it would be commonplace to enumerate, concerning death, "of chance and change, and fate in human life." Good God, who could have foreseen all this but four months back! I had reckoned, in particular, on my aunt's living many years; she was a very hearty old woman. But she was a mere skeleton before she died, looked more like a corpse that had lain weeks in the grave, than one fresh dead. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all,

yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." Coleridge, why are we to live on after all the strength and beauty of existence is gone, when all the life of life is fled, as poor Burns expresses it? Tell Lloyd I have had thoughts of turning Quaker, and have been reading, or am rather just beginning to read, a most capital book, good thoughts in good language, William Penn's *No Cross, no Crown*. I like it immensely. Unluckily I went to one of his meetings, tell him, in St. John Street, yesterday, and saw a man under all the agitations and workings of a fanatic, who believed himself under the influence of some "inevitable presence." This cured me of Quakerism. I love it in the books of Penn and Woolman; but I detest the vanity of a man thinking he speaks by the Spirit, when what he says an ordinary man might say without all that quaking and trembling. In the midst of his inspiration (and the effects of it were most noisy) was handed into the midst of the meeting a most terrible blackguard Wapping sailor. The poor man, I believe, would rather have been in the hottest part of an engagement, for the congregation of broad-brims, together with the ravings of the prophet, were too much for his gravity, though I saw even he had delicacy enough not to laugh out. And the inspired gentleman, though his manner was so supernatural, yet neither talked nor professed to talk any thing more than good sober sense, common morality, with now and then a declaration of not speaking from himself. Among other things, looking back to his childhood and early youth, he told the meeting what a graceless young dog he had been; that in his youth he had a good share of wit. Reader, if thou hadst

seen the gentleman, thou wouldst have sworn that it must indeed have been many years ago, for his rueful physiognomy would have scared away the playful goddess from the meeting, where he presided, for ever. A wit; a wit! what could he mean? It minded me of *Falkland* in the *Rivals*, "Am I full of wit and humour? No, indeed you are not. Am I the life and soul of every company I come into? No, it cannot be said you are." That hard-faced gentleman, a wit! Why, Nature wrote on his fanatic forehead fifty years ago, "Wit never comes, that comes to all." I should be as scandalised at a *bon mot* issuing from his oracle-looking mouth, as to see Cato go down a country dance. God love you all! You are very good to submit to be pleased with reading my nothings. 'Tis the privilege of friendship to talk nonsense, and to have her nonsense respected.—Yours ever,

C. LAMB.

LETTER XXIII.] April 7th, 1797.

Your last letter was dated the 10th of February; in it you promised to write again the next day. At least, I did not expect so long, so unfriend-like a silence. There was a time, Col ——, when a remissness of this sort in a dear friend would have lain very heavy on my mind; but latterly I have been too familiar with neglect to feel much from the semblance of it. Yet, to suspect one's self overlooked, and in the way to oblivion, is a feeling rather humbling; perhaps, as tending to self-mortification, not unfavourable to the spiritual state. Still, as you meant to confer no benefit on the soul of your friend, you do not stand

quite clear from the imputation of unkindliness, (a word, by which I mean the diminutive of unkindness).

Lloyd tells me he has been very ill, and was on the point of leaving you. I addressed a letter to him at Birmingham: perhaps he got it not, and is still with you. I hope his ill-health has not prevented his attending to a request I made in it, that he would write again very soon to let me know how he was. I hope to God poor Lloyd is not very bad, or in a very bad way. Pray satisfy me about these things.

And then David Hartley was unwell; and how is the small philosopher, the minute philosopher? and David's mother? Coleridge, I am not trifling; nor are these matter-of-fact questions only. You are all very dear and precious to me. Do what you will, Coleridge, you may hurt me and vex me by your silence, but you cannot estrange my heart from you all. I cannot scatter friendships like chuck-farthings, nor let them drop from mine hand like hour-glass sand. I have but two or three people in the world to whom I am more than indifferent, and I can't afford to whistle them off to the winds.

By the way, Lloyd may have told you about my sister. I told him. If not, I have taken her out of her confinement, and taken a room for her at Hackney, and spend my Sundays, holidays, &c., with her. She boards herself. In a little half-year's illness, and in such an illness, of such a nature, and of such consequences, to get her out into the world again, with a prospect of her never being so ill again,—this is to be ranked not among the common blessings of Providence. May that merciful God make tender my heart, and make me as thankful, as in my distress I

was earnest, in my prayers. Congratulate me on an ever-present and never-alienable friend like her. And do, do insert, if you have not *lost*, my Dedication. It will have lost half its value by coming so late. If you really are going on with that volume, I shall be enabled in a day or two to send you a short poem to insert. Now, do answer this. Friendship, and acts of friendship, should be reciprocal, and free as the air. A friend should never be reduced to beg an alms of his fellow; yet I will beg an alms: I entreat you to write, and tell me all about poor Lloyd, and all of you. God love and preserve you all!

C. LAMB.

LETTER XXIV.] April 15th, 1797.

The above you will please to print immediately before the blank verse fragments. Tell me if you like it. I fear the latter half is unequal to the former, in parts of which I think you will discover a delicacy of pencilling not quite un-Spenser-like. The latter half aims at the *measure*, but has failed to attain the *poetry* of Milton in his *Comus*, and Fletcher in that exquisite thing ycleped the *Faithful Shepherdess*, where they both use eight-syllable lines. But this latter half was finished in great haste, and as a task, not from that impulse which affects the name of inspiration.

By the way, I have lit upon Fairfax's *Godfrey of Bullen*, for half-a-crown. Rejoice with me.

Poor dear Lloyd! I had a letter from him yesterday; his state of mind is truly alarming. He has, by his own confession, kept a letter of mine unopened

three weeks; afraid, he says, to open it, lest I should speak upbraidingly to him; and yet this very letter of mine was in answer to one, wherein he informed me that an alarming illness had alone prevented him from writing. You will pray with me, I know, for his recovery; for surely, Coleridge, an exquisiteness of feeling like this must border on derangement. But I love him more and more, and will not give up the hope of his speedy recovery, as he tells me he is under Dr. Darwin's regimen.[1]

God bless us all, and shield us from insanity, which is "the sorest malady of all."

My kind love to your wife and child.

C. LAMB.

Pray write now.

LETTER XXV.] 1797.

I discern a possibility of my paying you a visit next week. May I, can I, shall I, come so soon? Have you *room* for me, *leisure* for me? and are you pretty well? Tell me all this honestly—immediately. And by what *day* coach could I come soonest and nearest to Stowey? A few months hence may suit

[1] Poor Charles Lloyd! These apprehensions were sadly realized. Delusions of the most melancholy kind thickened over his latter days; yet left his admirable intellect free for the finest processes of severe reasoning. At a time when, like Cowper, he believed himself the especial subject of Divine wrath, he could bear his part in the most subtile disquisition on questions of religion, morals, and poetry, with the nicest accuracy of perception and the most exemplary candour; and, after an argument of hours, revert, with a faint smile, to his own despair.—T.

you better; certainly me, as well. If so, say so. I long, I yearn, with all the longings of a child do I desire to see you, to come among you—to see the young philosopher, to thank Sara for her last year's invitation in person—to read your tragedy—to read over together our little book—to breathe fresh air—to revive in me vivid images of "*Salutation* scenery." There is a sort of sacrilege in my letting such ideas slip out of my mind and memory. Still that Richardson remaineth—a thorn in the side of Hope, when she would lean towards Stowey. Here I will leave off, for I dislike to fill up this paper (which involves a question so connected with my heart and soul) with meaner matter, or subjects to me less interesting. I can talk, as I can think, nothing else.

Thursday. C. LAMB.

LETTER XXVI.] June 13th, 1797.

I stared with wild wonderment to see thy well-known hand again. It revived many a pleasing recollection of an epistolary intercourse, of late strangely suspended, once the pride of my life. Before I even opened thy letter I figured to myself a sort of complacency which my little hoard at home would feel at receiving the new-comer into the little drawer where I keep my treasures of this kind. You have done well in writing to me. The little room (was it not a little one?) at the *Salutation* was already in the way of becoming a fading idea! It had begun to be classed in my memory with those "wanderings with a fair hair'd maid," in the recollection of which I feel

I have no property. You press me, very kindly do you press me, to come to Stowey. Obstacles, strong as death, prevent me at present; maybe I may be able to come before the year is out. Believe me, I will come as soon as I can; but I dread naming a probable time. It depends on fifty things, besides the expense, which is not nothing. Lloyd wants me to come to see him; but, besides that you have a prior claim on me, I should not feel myself so much at home with him, till he gets a house of his own. As to Richardson, caprice may grant what caprice only refused; and it is no more hardship, rightly considered, to be dependent on him for pleasure, than to lie at the mercy of the rain and sunshine for the enjoyment of a holiday: in either case we are not to look for a suspension of the laws of Nature. "Grill will be grill." Vide Spenser.

I could not but smile at the compromise you make with me for printing Lloyd's poems first; but there is in nature, I fear, too many tendencies to envy and jealousy not to justify you in your apology. Yet, if any one is welcome to pre-eminence from me, it is Lloyd, for he would be the last to desire it. So pray, let his name *uniformly* precede mine, for it would be treating me like a child to suppose it could give me pain. Yet, alas! I am not insusceptible of the bad passions. Thank God, I have the ingenuousness to be ashamed of them. I am dearly fond of Charles Lloyd; he is all goodness; and I have too much of the world in my composition to feel myself thoroughly deserving of his friendship.

Lloyd tells me that Sheridan put you upon writing your tragedy. I hope you are only Coleridgeizing when you talk of finishing it in a few days. Shak-

speare was a more modest man; but you best know your own power.

Of my last poem you speak slightingly. Surely the longer stanzas were pretty tolerable: at least there was one good line in it,

"Thick-shaded trees, with dark green leaf rich clad."

To adopt your own expression, I call this a "rich" line, a fine full line. And some others I thought even beautiful. Believe me, my little gentleman will feel some repugnance at riding behind in the basket; though, I confess, in pretty good company. Your picture of idiocy, with the sugar-loaf head, is exquisite; but are you not too severe upon our more favoured brethren in fatuity? Lloyd tells me how ill your wife and child have been. I rejoice that they are better. My kindest remembrances, and those of my sister. I send you a trifling letter; but you have only to think that I have been skimming the superficies of my mind, and found it only froth. Now, do write again! You cannot believe how I long and love always to hear about you. Yours most affectionately,

CHARLES LAMB.

Monday Night.

LETTER XXVII.] June 24th, 1797.

Did you seize the grand opportunity of seeing Kosciusko while he was at Bristol? I never saw a hero; I wonder how they look. I have been reading a most curious romance-like work, called the *Life of John*

Buncle, Esq. 'Tis very interesting, and an extraordinary compound of all manner of subjects, from the depth of the ludicrous to the heights of sublime religious truth. There is much abstruse science in it above my cut, and an infinite fund of pleasantry. John Buncle is a famous fine man, formed in Nature's most eccentric hour. I am ashamed of what I write; but I have no topic to talk of. I see nobody. I sit and read, or walk alone, and hear nothing. I am quite lost to conversation from disuse; and out of the sphere of my little family (who I am thankful are dearer and dearer to me every day) I see no face that brightens up at my approach. My friends are at a distance. Worldly hopes are at a low ebb with me, and unworldly thoughts are familiarised to me, though I occasionally indulge in them. Still I feel a calm not unlike content. I fear it is sometimes more akin to physical stupidity than to a heaven-flowing serenity and peace. What right have I to obtrude all this upon you? and what is such a letter to you? and if I come to Stowey, what conversation can I furnish to compensate my friend for those stores of knowledge and of fancy; those delightful treasures of wisdom, which, I know he will open to me? But it is better to give than to receive; and I was a very patient hearer, and docile scholar, in our winter evening meetings at Mr. May's; was I not, Coleridge? What I have owed to thee, my heart can ne'er forget.

God love you and yours! C. L.

Saturday.

LETTER XXVIII.]

WRITTEN A TWELVEMONTH AFTER THE EVENTS.

[*Friday next, Coleridge, is the day on which my Mother died.*]

Alas! how I am changed! Where be the tears,
The sobs, and forced suspensions of the breath, &c.[1]

* * * * *

Thou and I, dear friend,
With filial recognition sweet, shall know
One day the face of our dear mother in heaven,
And her remember'd looks of love shall greet
With answering looks of love, her placid smiles
Meet with a smile as placid, and her hand
With drops of fondness wet, nor fear repulse.[2]

* * * O ye loved names
Of friend, or playmate dear, gone are ye now.
Gone divers ways; to honour and credit some;
And some, I fear, to ignominy and shame![3]

The following I wrote when I had returned from Charles Lloyd, leaving him behind at Burton, with Southey. To understand some of it, you must remember that at that time he was very much perplexed in mind.

A stranger, and alone, I pass'd those scenes, &c.

The former of these poems I wrote with unusual celerity t'other morning at office. I expect you to like it better than any thing of mine; Lloyd does, and I do myself.

You use Lloyd very ill, never writing to him. I

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[1] See the Poetical Pieces.

[2] [Note in the margin of MS.] "This is almost literal from a letter of my sister's—less than a year ago."

[3] [Note in the margin of MS.] "Alluding to some of my old playfellows being, literally, 'on the town,' and some otherwise wretched."

tell you again that his is not a mind with which you should play tricks. He deserves more tenderness from you.

For myself, I must spoil a little passage of Beaumont and Fletcher's to adapt it to my feelings:—

> "I am prouder
> That I was once your friend, tho' now forgot,
> Than to have had another true to me."

If you don't write to me now, as I told Lloyd, I shall get angry, and call you hard names—Manchineel, and I don't know what else. I wish you would send me my great-coat. The snow and the rain season is at hand, and I have but a wretched old coat, once my father's, to keep 'em off, and that is transitory.

> "When time drives flocks from field to fold,
> When ways grow foul and blood gets cold,"

I shall remember where I left my coat. Meet emblem wilt thou be, old Winter, of a friend's neglect—cold, cold, cold! Remembrance where remembrance is due.

C. LAMB.

Sept. 1797.

LETTER XXIX.] Dec. 10th, 1797.

I am sorry I cannot now relish your poetical present so thoroughly as I feel it deserves; but I do not the less thank Lloyd and you for it.

Before I offer, what alone I have to offer, a few obvious remarks on the poems you sent me, I can but notice the odd coincidence of two young men, in one age, carolling their grandmothers. Love, what L. calls the "feverish and romantic tie," hath too long domineered over all the charities of home: the dear domestic ties of father, brother, husband. The

amiable and benevolent Cowper has a beautiful passage in his "Task," — some natural and painful reflections on his deceased parents: and Hayley's sweet lines to his mother are notoriously the best things he ever wrote. Cowper's lines, some of them are—

> "How gladly would the man recall to life
> The boy's neglected sire! a Mother, too,
> That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
> Might he demand them at the gates of death."[1]

I cannot but smile to see my granny so gaily decked forth: though, I think, whoever altered "thy" praises to "her" praises—"thy" honoured memory to "her" honoured memory, did wrong: they best expresst my feelings. There is a pensive state of recollection in which the mind is disposed to apostrophise the departed objects of its attachment; and, breaking loose from grammatical precision, changes from the first to the third, and from the third to the first person, just as the random fancy or the feeling directs. Among Lloyd's sonnets, the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th, are eminently beautiful. I think him too lavish of his expletives: the *do's* and *did's*, when they occur too often, bring a quaintness with them along with their simplicity, or rather air of antiquity, which the patrons of them seem desirous of conveying.

Another time, I may notice more particularly Lloyd's, Southey's, Dermody's Sonnets. I shrink from them now: my teasing lot makes me too con-

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[1] From "Winter Walk at Noon."—F.

fused for a clear judgment of things, too selfish for sympathy; and these ill-digested, meaningless remarks, I have imposed on myself as a task, to lull reflection, as well as to show you I did not neglect reading your valuable present. Return my acknowledgments to Lloyd; you two seem to be about realising an Elysium upon earth, and, no doubt, I shall be happier. Take my best wishes. Remember me most affectionately to Mrs. C——, and give little David Hartley (God bless its little heart!) a kiss for me. Bring him up to know the meaning of his Christian name, and what that name (imposed upon him) will demand of him.

God love you! C. LAMB.

I write, for one thing, to say that I shall write no more till you send me word where you are, for you are so soon to move.

My sister is pretty well, thank God. We think of you very often. God bless you: continue to be my correspondent, and I will strive to fancy that this world is *not* "all-barrenness."

LETTER XXX.] January 28th, 1798.

You have writ me many kind letters, and I have answered none of them. I don't deserve your attentions. An unnatural indifference has been creeping on me since my last misfortunes, or I should have seized the first opening of a correspondence with *you*. To you I owe much, under God. In my brief acquaintance with you in London, your conver-

sations won me to the better cause, and rescued me from the polluting spirit of the world. I might have been a worthless character without you; as it is, I do possess a certain improvable portion of devotional feelings, tho' when I view myself in the light of divine truth, and not according to the common measures of human judgment, I am altogether corrupt and sinful. This is no cant. I am very sincere.

These last afflictions, Coleridge, have failed to soften and bend my will. They found me unprepared. My former calamities produced in me a spirit of humility and a spirit of prayer. I thought they had sufficiently disciplined me; but the event ought to humble me. If God's judgment now fail to take away from me the heart of stone, what more grievous trials ought I not, to expect? I have been very querulous, impatient under the rod—full of little jealousies and heart burnings. I had wellnigh quarrelled with Charles Lloyd; and for no other reason, I believe, than that the good creature did all he could to make me happy. The truth is, I thought he tried to force my mind from its natural and proper bent. He continually wished me to be from home; he was drawing me *from* the consideration of my poor dear Mary's situation, rather than assisting me to gain a proper view of it with religious consolations. I wanted to be left to the tendency of my own mind, in a solitary state, which, in times past, I knew had led to quietness and a patient bearing of the yoke. He was hurt that I was not more constantly with him; but he was living with White, a man to whom I had never been accustomed to impart my *dearest feelings*, tho' from long habits of friendliness, and many a social and good quality, I loved him

very much. I met company there sometimes—indiscriminate company. Any society almost, when I am in affliction, is sorely painful to me. I seem to breathe more freely, to think more collectedly, to feel more properly and calmly, when alone. All these things the good creature did with the kindest intentions in the world, but they produced in me nothing but soreness and discontent. I became, as he complained, "jaundiced" towards him . . . but he has forgiven me; and his smile, I hope, will draw all such humours from me. I am recovering, God be praised for it, a healthiness of mind, something like calmness; but I want more religion. I am jealous of human helps and leaning-places. I rejoice in your good fortunes. May God at the last settle you!—You have had many and painful trials; humanly speaking they are going to end; but we should rather pray that discipline may attend us thro' the whole of our lives . . . . A careless and a dissolute spirit has advanced upon *me* with large strides. Pray God that my present afflictions may be sanctified to me! Mary is recovering; but I see no opening yet of a situation for her. Your invitation went to my very heart; but you have a power of exciting interest, of leading all hearts captive, too forcible to admit of Mary's being with you. I consider her as perpetually on the brink of madness. I think you would almost make her dance within an inch of the precipice: she must be with duller fancies, and cooler intellects. I know a young man of this description, who has suited her these twenty years, and may live to do so still, if we are one day restored to each other. In answer to your suggestions of occupation for me, I must say that I do not think my capacity altogether

suited for disquisitions of that kind. . . . . I have read little, I have a very weak memory, and retain little of what I read; am unused to compositions in which any methodising is required; but I thank you sincerely for the hint, and shall receive it as far as I am able; that is, endeavour to engage my mind in some constant and innocent pursuit. I know my capacities better than you do.

Accept my kindest love, and believe me yours, as ever. C. L.

S. T. Coleridge,
at the Reverend A. Rowe's,
Shrewsbury.

LETTER XXXI.] No date; but 1798, or 1799.

I am scarcely yet so reconciled to the loss of you, or so subsided into my wonted uniformity of feeling, as to sit calmly down to think of you and write to you. But I reason myself into the belief that those few and pleasant holidays shall not have been spent in vain. I feel improvement in the recollection of many a casual conversation. The names of Tom Poole,[1] of Wordsworth and his good sister, with thine and Sara's, are become "familiar in my mouth as household words." You would make me very happy if you think W. has no objection, by transcribing for me that inscription of his. I have some scattered sentences ever floating on my memory, teasing me that I cannot remember more of it. You may believe

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[1] Coleridge's kind friend, a resident in the neighbourhood of Nether-Stowey.—H.

I will make no improper use of it. Believe me I can think now of many subjects on which I had planned gaining information from you; but I forgot my "treasure's worth" while I possessed it. Your leg is now become to me a matter of much more importance; and many a little thing, which when I was present with you seemed scarce to *indent* my notice, now presses painfully on my remembrance. Is the Patriot come? Are Wordsworth and his sister gone yet? I was looking out for John Thelwall all the way from Bridgewater; and had I met him, I think it would have moved almost me to tears. You will oblige me, too, by sending me my great-coat, which I left behind in the oblivious state the mind is thrown into at parting. Is it not ridiculous that I sometimes envy that great-coat lingering so cunningly behind! At present I have none: so send it to me by a Stowey waggon, if there be such a thing, directing for C. L., No. 45, Chapel Street, Pentonville, near London. But above all, *that Inscription!* It will recall to me the tones of all your voices, and with them many a remembered kindness to one who could and can repay you all only by the silence of a grateful heart. I could not talk much while I was with you; but my silence was not sullenness, nor I hope from any bad motive; but, in truth, disuse has made me awkward at it. I know I behaved myself, particularly at Tom Poole's, and at Cruikshank's, most like a sulky child; but company and converse are strange to me. It was kind in you all to endure me as you did.

Are you and your dear Sara—to me also very dear, because very kind—agreed yet about the management of little Hartley? And how go on the little rogue's teeth? I will see White to-morrow and he shall send

you information on that matter; but as perhaps I can do it as well, after talking with him, I will keep this letter open.

My love and thanks to you and all of you.

C. L.

Wednesday evening.

LETTER XXXI. *a.*] [1798.]

THESES QUÆDAM THEOLOGICÆ.

First, Whether God loves a lying angel better than a true man?

Second, Whether the Archangel Uriel could affirm an untruth? and if he could, whether he would?

Third, Whether honesty be an angelic virtue, or not rather to be reckoned among those qualities which the schoolmen term *virtutes minus splendidæ?*

Fourth, Whether the higher order of Seraphim illuminati ever sneer?

Fifth, Whether pure intelligences can love?

Sixth, Whether the Seraphim ardentes do not manifest their virtues by the way of vision and theory? and whether practice be not a sub-celestial and merely human virtue?

Seventh, Whether the vision beatific be any thing more or less than a perpetual representment to each individual angel of his own present attainments and future capabilities, somehow in the manner of mortal looking-glasses, reflecting a perpetual complacency and self-satisfaction?

Eighth, and last, Whether an immortal and amenable soul may not come to be condemned at last, and the man never suspect it beforehand?

LEARNED SIR, MY FRIEND.—Presuming on our long habits of friendship, and emboldened further by your late liberal permission to avail myself of your corre-

spondence in case I want any knowledge, (which I intend to do when I have no Encyclopædia or Ladies' Magazine at hand to refer to in any matter of science,) I now submit to your inquiries the above theological propositions, to be by you defended or oppugned, or both, in the schools of Germany; whither, I am told, you are departing, to the utter dissatisfaction of your native Devonshire, and regret of universal England, but to my own individual consolation, if, through the channel of your wished return, learned sir, my friend, may be transmitted to this our island, from those famous theological wits of Leipsic and Gottingen, any rays of illumination, in vain to be derived from the home growth of our English halls and colleges. Finally wishing, learned sir, that you may see Schiller, and swing in a wood, (*vide* poems,) and sit upon a tun, and eat fat hams of Westphalia,

I remain

Your friend and docile pupil to instruct,

CHARLES LAMB.

LETTER XXXII.] 1800.

Dear Coleridge,—Soon after I wrote to you last, an offer was made me by Gutch[1] (you must remember him, at Christ's; you saw him, slightly, one day with

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[1] This old friend of Lamb's was alive in 1852, and in that year wrote with some pride of this allusion to his friendship with the Essayist.—F.

Thomson at our house), to come and lodge with him, at his house in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. This was a very comfortable offer to me, the rooms being at a reasonable rent, and including the use of an old servant, besides being infinitely preferable to ordinary lodgings *in our case*, as you must perceive. As Gutch knew all our story and the perpetual liability to a recurrence in my sister's disorder, probably to the end of her life, I certainly think the offer very generous and very friendly. I have got three rooms (including servant) under £34 a year. Here I soon found myself at home; and here, in six weeks after, Mary was well enough to join me. So we are once more settled. I am afraid we are not placed out of the reach of future interruptions. But I am determined to take what snatches of pleasure we can between the acts of our distressful drama. . . . . I have passed two days at Oxford, on a visit which I have long put off, to Gutch's family. The sight of the Bodleian Library, and, above all, a fine bust of Bishop Taylor, at All Souls', were particularly gratifying to me. Unluckily, it was not a family where I could take Mary with me, and I am afraid there is something of dishonesty in any pleasures I take without *her*. She never goes anywhere. I do not know what I can add to this letter. I hope you are better by this time; and I desire to be affectionately remembered to Sara and Hartley.

I expected before this to have had tidings of another little philosopher. Lloyd's wife is on the point of favouring the world.

Have you seen the new edition of Burns? his posthumous works and letters? I have only been able to procure the first volume, which contains his life—

very confusedly and badly written, and interspersed with dull pathological and *medical* discussions. It is written by a Dr. Currie. Do you know the well-meaning doctor! Alas, *ne sutor ultra crepidam!*

I hope to hear again from you very soon. Godwin is gone to Ireland on a visit to Grattan.[1] Before he went I passed much time with him, and he has showed me particular attentions: N.B. A thing I much like. Your books are all safe: only I have not thought it necessary to fetch away your last batch, which I understand are at Johnson's, the bookseller, who has got quite as much room, and will take as much care of them as myself; and you can send for them immediately from him.

I wish you would advert to a letter I sent you at Grassmere about *Christabel*, and comply with my request contained therein.

Love to all friends round Skiddaw.

C. Lamb.

Letter XXXIII.] Jan. 2nd 1800.

Dear Coleridge,—Now I write, I cannot miss this opportunity of acknowledging the obligations myself, and the readers in general of that luminous paper, the *Morning Post*, are under to you for the very novel and exquisite manner in which you combined political with grammatical science in your yesterday's dissertation on Mr. Wyndham's unhappy composi-

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[1] No doubt a mistake for Curran, with whom Godwin was acquainted.—F.

tion. It must have been the death-blow to that ministry. I expect Pitt and Grenville to resign. More especially the delicate and Cottrellian grace with which you officiated, with a ferula for a white wand, as gentleman usher to the word "also," which it seems did not know its place,

I expect Manning[1] of Cambridge in town to-night. Will you fulfil your promise of meeting him at my house? He is a man of a thousand. Give me a line to say what day, whether Saturday, Sunday, Monday, &c., and if Sara and the Philosopher can come. I am afraid if I did not at intervals call upon you, I should *never see you*. But I forget, the affairs of the nation engross your time and your mind.

Farewell. C. L.

LETTER XXXIV.] May 12th, 1800.

My dear Coleridge,—I don't know why I write, except from the propensity which misery has to tell her griefs. Hetty died on Friday night, about eleven o'clock, after eight days' illness. Mary, in consequence of fatigue and anxiety, is fallen ill again, and I was obliged to remove her yesterday. I am left alone in a house with nothing but Hetty's dead body to keep me company. To-morrow I bury her, and then I shall be quite alone, with nothing but a cat, to remind me that the house has been full of living beings like myself. My heart is quite sunk, and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better again, but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful; nor is it the least of our evils that her case and all our story is so well known

around us. We are in a manner *marked*. Excuse my troubling you, but I have nobody by me to speak to me. I slept out last night, not being able to endure the change and the stillness; but I did not sleep well, and I must come back to my own bed. I am going to try and get a friend to come and be with me to-morrow. I am completely shipwrecked. My head is quite bad. I almost wish that Mary were dead. God bless you! Love to Sara and Hartley.—*Monday*. C. LAMB.

LETTER XXXV.] June 22, 1800.

By some fatality, unusual with me, I have mislaid the list of books which you want. Can you, from memory, easily supply me with another?

I confess to Statius, and I detained him wilfully, out of a reverent regard to your style. Statius, they tell me, is turgid. As to that other Latin book, since you know neither its name nor subject, your wants (I crave leave to apprehend) cannot be very urgent. Meanwhile, dream that it is one of the lost Decades of Livy.

Your partiality to me has led you to form an erroneous opinion as to the measure of delight you suppose me to take in obliging. Pray be careful that it spread no further. 'Tis one of those heresies that is very pregnant. Pray rest more satisfied with the portion of learning which you have got, and disturb my peaceful ignorance as little as possible with such sort of commissions.

Did you never observe an appearance well known by the name of the man in the moon? Some scan-

dalous old maids have set on foot a report, that it is Endymion.

Your theory about the first awkward step a man makes being the consequence of learning to dance, is not universal. We have known many youths bred up at Christ's, who never learned to dance, yet the world imputes to them no very graceful motions. I remember there was little Hudson, the immortal precentor of St. Paul's, to teach us our quavers; but, to the best of my recollection, there was no master of motions when we were at Christ's.

Farewell, in haste.

C. L.

LETTER XXXVI.] Aug. 6th, 1800.

Dear Coleridge,—I have taken to-day, and delivered to L. & Co., *Imprimis:* your books, viz., three ponderous German dictionaries, one volume (I can find no more) of German and French ditto, sundry other German books unbound, as you left them, *Percy's Ancient Poetry*, and one volume of *Anderson's Poets*. I specify them, that you may not lose any. *Secundo:* a dressing gown (value, fivepence) in which you used to sit and look like a conjuror, when you were translating Wallenstein. A case of two razors, and a shaving-box and strap. This it has cost me a severe struggle to part with. They are in a brown-paper parcel, which also contains sundry papers and poems, sermons, *some few Epic* Poems,—one about Cain and Abel, which came from Poole, &c., &c., and also your

tragedy; with one or two small German books, and that drama in which Got-fader performs. *Tertio:* a small oblong box containing *all your letters*, collected from all your waste papers, and which fill the said little box. All other waste papers, which I judged worth sending, are in the paper parcel aforesaid. But you will find *all* your letters in the box by themselves. Thus have I discharged my conscience and my lumber-room of all your property, save and except a folio entitled *Tyrrell's Bibliotheca Politica*, which you used to learn your politics out of when you wrote for the *Post*, *mutatis mutandis*, *i. e.*, applying past inferences to modern *data*. I retain that, because I am sensible I am very deficient in the politics myself; and I have torn up (don't be angry, waste paper has risen forty per cent., and I can't afford to buy it) all *Buonaparte's Letters*, *Arthur Young's Treatise on Corn*, and one or two more light-armed infantry, which I thought better suited the flippancy of London discussion than the dignity of Keswick thinking. Mary says you will be in a passion about them, when you come to miss them; but you must study philosophy. Read *Albertus Magnus de Chartis Amissis* five times over after phlebotomising,—'tis Burton's recipe—and then be angry with an absent friend if you can.

Sara is obscure. Am I to understand by her letter, that she sends a *kiss* to Eliza Buckingham? Pray tell your wife that a note of interrogation on the superscription of a letter is highly ungrammatical: she proposes writing my name *Lamb?* Lambe is quite enough. I have had the Anthology, and like only one thing in it, *Lewti;* but of that the last stanza

is detestable, the rest most exquisite: the epithet *enviable* would dash the finest poem. For God's sake (I never was more serious) don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. It did well enough five years ago when I came to see you, and was moral coxcomb enough at the time you wrote the lines, to feed upon such epithets; but, besides that, the meaning of "gentle" is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited; the very quality of gentleness is abhorrent to such vile trumpetings. My *sentiment* is long since vanished. I hope my *virtues* have done *sucking*. I can scarce think but you meant it in joke. I hope you did, for I should be ashamed to believe that you could think to gratify me by such praise, fit only to be a cordial to some green-sick sonneteer.[1]

I have hit off the following in imitation of old English poetry, which, I imagine, I am a dab at. The measure is unmeasurable; but it most resembles that beautiful ballad, the "Old and Young Courtier;" and in its feature of taking the extremes of two situations

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[1] This refers to a poem of Coleridge's, composed in 1797, and published in the Anthology of the year 1800, under the title of *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, addressed to "Charles Lamb, of the India House, London," in which Lamb is thus apostrophised, as taking more pleasure in the country than Coleridge's other visitors; a compliment which even then he scarcely merited:—

> "—— But thou, methinks most glad,
> My gentle-hearted Charles! For thou hast pined
> And linger'd after Nature many a year,
> In the great city pent,"—&c.—T.

for just parallel, it resembles the old poetry certainly. If I could but stretch out the circumstances to twelve more verses, *i. e.*, if I had as much genius as the writer of that old song, I think it would be excellent. It was to follow an imitation of Burton in prose, which you have not seen. But fate "and wisest Stewart" say No.[1]

I can send you 200 pens and six quires of paper *immediately*, if they will answer the carriage by coach. It would be foolish to pack 'em up *cum multis libris et cæteris ;* they would all spoil. I only wait your commands to coach them. I would pay five-and-forty thousand carriages to read W.'s tragedy, of which I have heard so much and seen so little—only what I saw at Stowey. Pray give me an order in writing on Longman for *Lyrical Ballads*. I have the first volume, and, truth to tell, six shillings is a broad shot. I cram all I can in, to save a multiplying of letters,—those pretty comets with swinging tails.

I'll just crowd in, God bless you !

C. Lamb.

Wednesday night.

Letter XXXVII.] Aug. 14, 1800.

My head is playing all the tunes in the world, ringing such peals ! It has just finished the "Merry Christ Church Bells," and absolutely is beginning "Turn again Whittington," Buz, buz, buz, bum, bum, bum, wheeze, wheeze, wheeze, fen, fen, fen, tinky, tinky,

[1] The quaint and pathetic poem, entitled "A Ballad, noticing the difference of Rich and Poor, in the ways of a rich noble's palace and a poor workhouse."—T.

tinky, *cr'annch*. I shall certainly come to be condemned at last. I have been drinking too much for two days running. I find my moral sense in the last stage of a consumption, and my religion getting faint. This is disheartening ; but I trust the devil will not overpower me. In the midst of this infernal larum, Conscience is barking and yelping as loud as any of them. I have sat down to read over again your satire upon me in the *Anthology*, and I think I do begin to spy out something like beauty and design in it. I perfectly accede to all your alterations, and only desire that you had cut deeper, when your hand was in.

In sober truth, I cannot see any great truth in the little dialogue called "Blenheim." It is rather novel and pretty, but the thought is very obvious and is but poor prattle, a thing of easy imitation. *Pauper vult videri et est.*

In the next edition of the *Anthology* (which Phœbus avert, and those nine other wandering maids also !) please to blot out "gentle-hearted," and substitute "drunken dog, ragged head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering," or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question. And for Charles read Tom, or Bob, or Richard for mere delicacy. Hang you, I was beginning to forgive you, and believe in earnest that the lugging in of my proper name was purely unintentional on your part, when looking back for further conviction, stares me in the face, "Charles Lamb of the *India House*." *Now* I am convinced it was all done in malice, heaped sack-upon-sack, congregated, studied malice. You dog! your 141st page shall not save you. I own I was just ready to acknowledge that there is a something not unlike good poetry in that page, if you had not

run into the unintelligible abstraction-fit about the manner of the Deity's making spirits perceive his presence. No created thing alive can receive any honour from such thin show-box attributes. By the by, where did you pick up that scandalous piece of private history about the angel and the Duchess of Devonshire ?[1] If it is a fiction of your own, why truly it was a very modest one *for you*. Now I do affirm, that "Lewti" is a very beautiful poem. I *was* in earnest when I praised it. It describes a silly species of one not the wisest of passions. *Therefore* it cannot deeply affect a disenthralled mind. But such imagery, such novelty, such delicacy, and such versification never got into an *Anthology* before. I am only sorry that the cause of all the passionate complaint is not greater than the trifling circumstance of Lewti being out of temper one day. "Gaulberto" certainly has considerable originality, but sadly wants finishing. It is, as it is, one of the very best in the book. Next to "Lewti" I like the "Raven," which has a good deal of humour. I was pleased to see it again, for you once sent it me, and I have lost the letter which contained it. Now I am on the subject of Anthologies, I must say I am sorry the old pastoral way has fallen into disrepute. The gentry which now indite sonnets are certainly the legitimate descendants of the ancient shepherds. The same simpering face of description, the old family face, is visibly continued in the line. Some of their ancestors' labours are yet to be found in

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[1] The Duchess, to whom Coleridge addressed the well-known lines

"O Lady, nursed in pomp and pleasure!
Whence learn'd you that heroic measure ?"—T.

Allan Ramsay's and Jacob Tonson's Miscellanies. But miscellanies decaying, and the old pastoral way dying of mere want, their successors (driven from their paternal acres) now-a-days settle and lie upon Magazines and Anthologies. This race of men are uncommonly addicted to superstition. Some of them are idolators, and worship the moon. Others deify qualities, as Love, Friendship, Sensibility; or bare accidents, as Solitude. Grief and Melancholy have their respective altars and temples among them, as the heathens builded theirs to Mors, Febris, Pallor, Oris. They all agree in ascribing a peculiar sanctity to the number 14. One of their own legislators affirmeth, that whatever exceeds that number "encroacheth upon the province of the elegy"—*vice versa*, whatever "cometh short of that number abutteth upon the premises of the epigram." I have been able to dicover but few *images* in their temples, which like the caves of Delphos of old, are famous for giving *echoes*. They impute a religious importance to the letter O, whether because by its roundness it is thought to typify the moon, their principal goddess, or for its analogies to their own labours, all ending where they began, or for whatever other high and mystical reference, I have never been able to discover, but I observe they never begin their invocations to their gods without it, except indeed one insignificant sect among them, who use the Doric A, pronounced like Ah! broad, instead. These boast to have restored the old Dorian mood.

Now I am on the subject of poetry, I must announce to you, who doubtless in your remote part of the island have not heard tidings of so great a blessing, that George Dyer hath prepared two ponderous

volumes full of poetry and criticism. They impend over the town, and are threatened to fall in the Winter. The first volume contains every sort of poetry, except personal satire, which George, in his truly original prospectus, renounceth for ever, whimsically foisting the intention in between the price of his book and the proposed number of subscribers. (If I can, I will get you a copy of his *handbill*.) He has tried his *vein* in every species besides—the Spenserian, Thomsonian, Masonic, and Akensidish more especially. The second volume is all criticism; wherein he demonstrates to the entire satisfaction of the literary world, in a way that must silence all reply for ever, that the Pastoral was introduced by Theocritus, and polished by Virgil and Pope; that Gray and Mason (who always hunt in couples in George's brain) have a good deal of poetical fire and true lyric genius; that Cowley was ruined by excess of wit (a warning to all moderns); that Charles Lloyd, Charles Lamb, and William Wordsworth, in later days, have struck the true chords of poesy. O George, George! with a head uniformly wrong, and a heart uniformly right, that I had power and might equal to my wishes: then I would call the gentry of thy native island, and they should come in troops, flocking at the sound of thy prospectus trumpet, and crowding who shall be first to stand in thy list of subscribers! I can only put twelve shillings into thy pocket (which, I will answer for them, will not stick there long), out of a pocket almost as bare as thine. Is it not a pity so much fine writing should be erased? But, to tell the truth, I began to scent that I was getting into that sort of style which Longinus and Dionysius Halicarnassus aptly call "the affected."

C. L.

LETTER XXXVIII.] Aug. 26th, 1800.

How do you like this little epigram? It is not my writing, nor had I any finger it. If you concur with me in thinking it very elegant and very original, I shall be tempted to name the author to you.[1] I will just hint that it is almost or quite a first attempt.

HELEN.

HIGH-BORN Helen, round your dwelling
These twenty years I've paced in vain:
Haughty beauty, thy lover's duty
Hath been to glory in his pain.

High-born Helen, proudly telling
Stories of thy cold disdain;
I starve, I die, now you comply,
And I no longer can complain.

These twenty years I've lived on tears,
Dwelling for ever on a frown;
On sighs I've fed, your scorn my bread;
I perish now you kind are grown.

Can I, who loved my beloved
But for the scorn "was in her eye,"
Can I be moved for my beloved,
When she "returns me sigh for sigh?"

In stately pride, by my bed-side,
High-born Helen's portrait's hung;
Deaf to my praise, my mournful lays
Are nightly to the portrait sung.

To that I weep, nor ever sleep,
Complaining all night long to her.
Helen, grown old, no longer cold,
Said, "You to all men I prefer."

[1] The author was Mary Lamb.

By the by, I have a sort of recollection that somebody, I think *you*, promised me a sight of Wordsworth's Tragedy. I should be very glad of it just now; for I have got Manning with me, and should like to read it *with him*. But this, I confess, is a refinement. Under any circumstances, alone, in Cold-Bath prison, or in the desert island, just when Prospero and his crew had set off, with Caliban in a cage, to Milan, it would be a treat to me to read that play. Manning has read it, so has Lloyd, and all Lloyd's family; but I could not get him to betray his trust by giving *me* a sight of it. Lloyd is sadly deficient in some of those virtuous vices. I have just lit upon a most beautiful fiction of Hell punishments by the author of *Hush-thumbo*, a mad farce. The inventor imagines that in Hell there is a great caldron of hot water, in which a man can scarce hold his finger, and an immense sieve over it, into which the probationary souls are put—

> "And all the little souls
> Pop thro' the riddle holes!

George Dyer is the only literary character I am happily acquainted with. The oftener I see him, the more deeply I admire him. He is goodness itself. If I could but calculate the precise date of his death, I would write a novel on purpose to make George the hero. I could hit him off to a hair.

George brought a Dr. Anderson to see me.[1] The doctor is a very pleasant old man, a great genius for agriculture, one that ties his breeches-knees with

[1] This paragraph was suppressed in the first edition of the Letters, "lest," adds the Editor, "it should give pain to that excellent person, then living."

packthread, and boasts of having had disappointments from ministers. The doctor happened to mention an epic poem by one Wilkie, called the *Epigonaid*, in which he assured us there is not one tolerable line from beginning to end, but that all the characters, incidents, &c., are verbally copied from *Homer*. George, who had been sitting quite inattentive to the doctor's criticism, no sooner heard the sound of *Homer* strike his pericranicks, than up he gets, and declares he must see that poem immediately: where was it to be had? An epic poem of 8000 lines, and *he* not hear of it! There must be some good things in it, and it was necessary he should see it, for he had touched pretty deeply upon that subject in his criticisms on the Epic. George has touched pretty deeply upon the Lyric, I find; he has also prepared a dissertation on the Drama and the comparison of the English and German theatres. As I rather doubted his competency to do the latter, knowing that his peculiar *turn* lies in the lyric species of composition, I questioned George what English plays he had read. I found that he *had* read Shakspeare (whom he calls an original, but irregular, genius); but it was a good while ago; and he has dipped into Rowe and Otway, I suppose having found their names in *Johnson's Lives* at full length; and upon this slender ground he has undertaken the task. He never seemed even to have heard of Fletcher, Ford, Marlowe, Massinger, and the worthies of Dodsley's collection; but he is to read all these, to prepare him for bringing out his "Parallel" in the Winter. I find he is also determined to vindicate poetry from the shackles which Aristotle and some others have imposed upon it, which is very goodnatured of him, and very neces-

sary just now. Now I am *touching* so *deeply* upon poetry, can I forget that I have just received from Cottle a magnificent copy of his Guinea *Alfred*. Four-and-twenty books to read in the dog-days! I got as far as the Mad Monk the first day, and fainted. Mr. Cottle's genius strongly points him to the *Pastoral*, but his inclinations divert him perpetually from his calling. He imitates Southey, as Rowe did Shakspeare, with his "Good morrow to ye; good master Lieutenant." Instead of *a* man, *a* woman, *a* daughter, he constantly writes one a man, one a woman, one his daughter. Instead of *the* king, *the* hero, he constantly writes, he the king, he the hero; two flowers of rhetoric, palpably from the "Joan." But Mr. Cottle soars a higher pitch: and when he *is* original, it is in a most original way indeed. His terrific scenes are indefatigable. Serpents, asps, spiders, ghosts, dead bodies, staircases made of nothing, with adders' tongues for bannisters. What a brain he must have! He puts as many plums in his pudding as my grandmother used to do;—and then his emerging from Hell's horrors into light, and treading on pure flats of this earth—for twenty-three books together!

C. L.

LETTER XXXIX.] Oct. 9th, 1800.

I suppose you have heard of the death of Amos Cottle. I paid a solemn visit of condolence to his brother, accompanied by George Dyer, of burlesque memory. I went, trembling to see poor Cottle so immediately upon the event. He was in black; and his younger brother was also in black. Every thing wore an aspect suitable to the respect due to the

freshly dead. For some time after our entrance, nobody spake till George modestly put in a question, whether *Alfred* was likely to sell. This was Lethe to Cottle, and his poor face, wet with tears, and his kind eye brightened up in a moment. Now I felt it was my cue to speak. I had to thank him for a present of a magnificent copy, and had promised to send him my remarks,—the least thing I could do; so I ventured to suggest, that I perceived a considerable improvement he had made in his first book since the state in which he first read it to me. Joseph, who till now had sat with his knees cowering in by the fireplace, wheeled about, and with great difficulty of body shifted the same round to the corner of a table where I was sitting, and first stationing one thigh over the other, which is his sedentary mood, and placidly fixing his benevolent face right against mine, waited my observations. At that moment it came strongly into my mind, that I had got Uncle Toby before me, he looked so kind and so good. I could not say an unkind thing of *Alfred*. So I set my memory to work to recollect what was the name of Alfred's Queen, and with some adroitness recalled the well-known sound to Cottle's ears of Alswitha. At that moment I could perceive that Cottle had forgot his brother was so lately become a blessed spirit. In the language of mathematicians the author was as 9, the brother as 1. I felt my cue, and strong pity working at the root, I went to work, and beslabber'd *Alfred* with most unqualified praise, or only qualifying my praise by the occasional politic interposition of an exception taken against trivial faults, slips, and human imperfections, which, by removing the appearance of insincerity, did but in truth heighten the relish. Perhaps I might

have spared that refinement, for Joseph was in a humour to hope and believe *all things*. What I said was beautifully supported, corroborated, and confirmed by the stupidity of his brother on my left hand, and by George on my right, who has an utter incapacity of comprehending that there can be any thing bad in poetry. All poems are *good* poems to George; all men are *fine geniuses*. So what with my actual memory, of which I made the most, and Cottle's own helping me out, for I *really* had forgotten a good deal of *Alfred*, I made shift to discuss the most essential parts entirely to the satisfaction of its author, who repeatedly declared that he loved nothing better than *candid* criticism. Was I a candid greyhound now for all this? or did I do right? I believe I did. The effect was luscious to my conscience. For all the rest of the evening Amos was no more heard of, till George revived the subject by inquiring whether some account should not be drawn up by the friends of the deceased to be inserted in Phillips's Monthly Obituary; adding, that Amos was estimable both for his head and heart, and would have made a fine poet if he had lived. To the expediency of this measure Cottle fully assented, but could not help adding that he always thought that the qualities of his brother's heart exceeded those of his head. I believe his brother, when living, had formed precisely the same idea of him; and I apprehend the world will assent to both judgments. I rather guess that the Brothers were poetical rivals. I judged so when I saw them together. Poor Cottle, I must leave him, after his short dream, to muse again upon his poor brother, for whom I am sure in secret he will yet shed many a tear. Now send me in return some Greta news.

C. L.

LETTER XL.] No date [end of 1800].

I send you, in this parcel, my play, which I beg you to present in my name, with my respect and love, to Wordsworth and his sister. You blame us for giving your direction to Miss Wesley. The woman has been ten times after us about it, and we gave it her at last, under the idea that no further harm would ensue; but she would *once* write to you, and you would bite your lips and forget to answer it, and so it would end. You read us a dismal homily upon "Realities." We know, quite as well as you do, what are shadows and what are realities. You, for instance, when you are over your fourth or fifth jorum, chirping about old school occurrences, are the best of realities. Shadows are cold, thin things, that have no warmth or grasp in them. Miss Wesley and her friend, and a tribe of authoresses that come after you here daily, and, in defect of you, hive and cluster upon us, are the shadows. You encouraged that mopsey, Miss Wesley, to dance after you, in the hope of having her nonsense put into a nonsensical Anthology. We have pretty well shaken her off by that simple expedient of referring her to you; but there are more burs in the wind. I came home t'other day from business, hungry as a hunter, to dinner, with nothing, I am sure, of the author but *hunger* about me; and whom found I closeted with Mary but a friend of this Miss Wesley, one Miss Benjay or Benje[1]; I don't know how she spells her name. I just came in time enough, I believe, luckily to prevent them from exchanging vows of eternal friendship. It seems

[1] Miss Benger, authoress of a "Life of Tobin," &c.—F.

she is one of your authoresses, that you first foster, and then upbraid us with. But I forgive you. "The rogue has given me potions to make me love him." Well; go she would not, nor step a step over our threshold, till we had promised to come and drink tea with her next night. I had never seen her before, and could not tell who the devil it was that was so familiar. We went, however, not to be impolite. Her lodgings are up two pair of stairs in East Street. Tea and coffee, and macaroons—a kind of cake—much love. We sat down. Presently Miss Benjay broke the silence, by declaring herself quite of a different opinion from *D'Israeli*, who supposes the differences of human intellect to be the mere effect of organisation. She begged to know my opinion. I attempted to carry it off with a pun upon organ, but that went off very flat. She immediately conceived a very low opinion of my metaphysics; and, turning round to Mary, put some question to her in French,—possibly having heard that neither Mary nor I understood French. The explanation that took place occasioned some embarrassment and much wondering. She then fell into an insulting conversation about the comparative genius and merits of all modern languages, and concluded with asserting that the Saxon was esteemed the purest dialect in Germany. From thence she passed into the subject of poetry; where I, who had hitherto sat mute, and a hearer only, humbly hoped I might now put in a word to some advantage, seeing that it was my own trade in a manner. But I was stopped by a round assertion, that no good poetry had appeared since Dr. Johnson's time. It seems the Doctor has suppressed many hopeful geniuses that way, by the severity of his

critical strictures in his *Lives of the Poets*. I here ventured to question the fact, and was beginning to appeal to *names*, but I was assured "it was certainly the case." Then we discussed Miss More's book on education, which I had never read. It seems Dr. Gregory, another of Miss Benjay's friends, has found fault with one of Miss More's metaphors. Miss More has been at some pains to vindicate herself,—in the opinion of Miss Benjay, not without success. It seems the Doctor is invariably against the use of broken or mixed metaphor, which he reprobates, against the authority of Shakspeare himself. We next discussed the question, whether Pope was a poet? I find Dr. Gregory is of opinion he was not, though Miss Seward does not at all concur with him in this. We then sat upon the comparative merits of the ten translations of *Pizarro*, and Miss Benjay or Benje advised Mary to take two of them home; (she thought it might afford her some pleasure to compare them *verbatim*;) which we declined. It being now nine o'clock, wine and macaroons were again served round, and we parted, with a promise to go again next week, and meet the Miss Porters, who, it seems, have heard much of Mr. Coleridge, and wish to meet *us*, because we are *his* friends. I have been preparing for the occasion. I crowd cotton in my ears. I read all the reviews and magazines of the past month, against the dreadful meeting, and I hope by these means to cut a tolerable second-rate figure.

Pray let us have no more complaints about shadows. We are in a fair way, *through you*, to surfeit sick upon them.

Our loves and respects to your host and hostess Our dearest love to Coleridge.

Take no thought about your proof sheets; they shall be done as if Woodfall himself did them. Pray send us word of Mrs. Coleridge and little David Hartley, your little reality.

Farewell, dear Substance. Take no umbrage at any thing I have written.

C. LAMB, *Umbra.*

Land of Shadows,
Shadow Month the 16th or 17th, 1800.

Coleridge, I find loose among your papers a copy of *Christabel.* It wants about thirty lines; you will very much oblige me by sending me the beginning as far as that line,—

"And the spring comes slowly up this way;"

and the intermediate lines between—

"The lady leaps up suddenly,
The lovely Lady Christabel;"

and the lines,—

"She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak."

The trouble to you *will be small,* and the benefit to us *very great.* A pretty antithesis! A figure in speech I much applaud.

Godwin has called upon us. He spent one evening here: was very friendly: kept us up till midnight, drank punch, and talked about you. He seems above all men, mortified at your going away. Suppose you were to write to that good-natured heathen: "Or is he a *shadow?*"

If I do not *write,* impute it to the long postage, of which you have so much cause to complain. I have

scribbled over a *queer letter*, as I find by perusal, but it means no mischief.

I am, and will be, yours ever, in sober sadness,

C. L.

Write your *German* as plain as sunshine, for that must correct itself. You know I am *homo unius linguæ:* in English—illiterate, a dunce, a ninny.

LETTER XLI.] Sept. 8th, 1802.

Dear Coleridge,—I thought of not writing till we had performed some of our commissions; but we have been hindered from setting about them, which yet shall be done to a tittle. We got home very pleasantly on Sunday. Mary is a good deal fatigued, and finds the difference of going *to* a place, and coming *from* it. I feel that I shall remember your mountains to the last day I live. They haunt me perpetually. I am like a man who has been falling in love unknown to himself, which he finds out when he leaves the lady. I do not remember any very strong impression while they were present; but, being gone, their mementos are shelved in my brain. We passed a very pleasant little time with the Clarksons. The Wordsworths are at Montague's rooms, near neighbours to us.[1] They dined with us yesterday, and I was their guide to Bartlemy Fair!

[1] Mr. Basil Montague and his lady, who were, during Lamb's life, among his most cordial and most honoured friends.—T.

LETTER XLII.] Oct. 9th, 1802.

CAROLUS AGNUS COLERIDGIO SUO S.

Carissime,—Scribis, ut nummos scilicet epistolarios solvam et postremo in Tartara abeam: immo tu potius Tartaricum (ut aiunt) deprehendisti, qui me vernaculâ meâ linguâ pro scribâ conductitio per tot annos satis eleganter usem ad Latinè impure et canino fere ore latrandum per tuasmet epistolas benè compositas et concinnatas percellire studueris. Conabor tamen: Attamen vereor, ut Ædes istas nostri Christi, inter quas tantâ diligentiâ magistri improbâ bonis literulis, quasi per clysterem quendam injectis, infrà supràque olim penitùs imbutus fui, Barnesii et Marklandii doctissimorum virorum nominibus adhuc gaudentes, barbarismis meis peregrinís et aliunde quæsitis valde dehonestavero. Sed pergere quocunque placet. Adeste igitur, quotquot estis, conjugationum declinationumve turmæ, terribilia spectra, et tu imprimis ades, Umbra et Imago maxima obsoletæ (Diis gratiæ) Virgæ, quâ novissime in mentem receptâ, horrescunt subito natales, et parum deest quo minùs braccas meas ultro usque ad crura demittam, et ipse puer pueriliter ejulem.

Ista tua Carmina Chamouniana satis grandia esse mihi constat; sed hoc mihi nonnihil displicet, quòd in iis illæ montium Grisosonum inter se responsiones totidem roboant anglicè, *God, God*, haud aliter atque temet audivi tuas montes Cumbrianas resonare docentes, *Tod, Tod*, nempe Doctorem infelicem: vocem certe haud Deum Sonantem. Pro cæteris plaudo.

Itidem comparationes istas tuas satis callidas et lepidas certè novi: sed quid hoc ad verum? cum illi

Consulari viro et *mentem irritabilem* istum Julianum: et etiam *astutias frigidulas* quasdem Augusto propriores, nequaquam congruenter uno afflatu comparationis causâ insedisse affirmaveris: necnon nescio quid similitudinis etiam cum Tiberio tertio in loco solicite produxeris. Quid tibi equidem cum uno vel altero Cæsare, cùm universi Duodecim ad comparationes tuas se ultro tulerint? Præterea, vetustati adnutans, comparationes iniquas odi.

Istas Wordsworthianas nuptias (vel potius cujusdam *Edmundii* tui) te retulisse mirificum gaudeo. Valeas, Maria, fortunata nimium, et antiquæ illæ Mariæ Virgini (comparatione plusquam Cæsareanâ) forsitan comparanda, quoniam 'beata inter mulieres:' et etiam fortasse Wordsworthium ipsum tuum maritum Angelo Salutatori æquare fas erit, quoniam e Cœlo (ut ille) descendunt et Musæ et ipse Musicolæ: at Wordsworthium Musarum observantissimum semper novi. Necnon te quoque affinitate hâc novâ, Dorothea, gratulor: et tu certe alterum *donum Dei.*

Istum Ludum, quem tu, Coleridgi, Americanum garris, a Ludo (ut Ludi sunt) maximè abhorrentem prætereo: nempe quid ad Ludum attinet, totius illæ gentis Columbianæ, a nostrâ gente, eadem stirpe ortâ, ludi singuli causa voluntatem perperam alienare? Quæso ego materiam ludi: te Bella ingeris.

Denique valeas, et quid de Latinitate meâ putes, dicas: facias ut opossum illum nostrum volantem vel (ut tu malis) quendam Piscem errabundum, a me salvum et pulcherrimum esse jubeas. Valeant uxor tua cum Hartleiio nostro. Soror mea salva est et ego: vos et ipsa salvere jubet. Ulterius progrediri non liquet: homo sum æratus.

P.S. Pene mihi exciderat, apud me esse Librorum

a Johanno Miltono Latinè scriptorum volumina duo, quæ (Deo volente) cum cæteris tuis libris ocyùs citiùs per Maria ad te missura curabo; sed me in hoc tali genere rerum nullo modo *festinantem* novisti: habes confitentem reum. Hoc solum dici restat, prædicta, volumina pulchra esse et omnia opera Latina J. M. in se continere. Circa defensionem istam Pro Pop°. Ang°. acerrimam in præsens ipse præclaro gaudio moror.

Jussa tua Stuartina faciam ut diligenter colam.
Iterum iterumque valeas:
Et facias memor sis nostri.

LETTER XLIII.] Oct. 11th, 1802.

Dear Coleridge,—Your offer about the German poems is exceedingly kind[1]; but I do not think it a wise speculation, because the time it would take you to put them into prose would be nearly as great as if you versified them. Indeed I am sure you could do the one nearly as soon as the other; so that instead of a division of labour, it would be only a multiplica tion. But I will think of your offer in another light. I dare say I could find many things, of a light nature, to suit that paper, which you would not object to pass upon Stuart as your own, and I should come in for some light profits, and Stuart think the more highly of your assiduity. "Bishop Hall's Characters" I know nothing about, having never seen them. I will reconsider your offer, which is very plausible; but as to the drudgery of going every day to an editor

[1] It was proposed that Coleridge should furnish literal translations from the German, which Lamb was to versify for the *Morning Post*.—F.

with my scraps, like a pedler, for him to pick out and tumble about my ribbons and posies, and to wait in his lobby, &c., no money could make up for the degradation. You are in too high request with him to have any thing unpleasant of that sort to submit to.[1]

It was quite a slip of my pen, in my Latin letter, when I told you I had Milton's Latin Works. I ought to have said his Prose Works, in two volumes, Birck's edition, containing all, both Latin and English, a fuller and better edition than Lloyd's of Toland. It is completely at your service, and you must accept it from me; at the same time I shall be much obliged to you for your Latin Milton, which you think you have at Howitt's; it will leave me nothing to wish for but the *History of England*, which I shall soon pick up for a trifle. But you must write me word whether the Miltons are worth paying carriage for. You have a Milton; but it is pleasanter to eat one's own pease out of one's own garden, than to buy them by the peck at Covent Garden; and a book reads the better, which is our own, and has been so long known to us, that we know the topography of its blots, and dog's-ears, and can trace the dirt in it to having read it at tea with buttered muffins, or over a pipe, which I think is the maximum. But, Coleridge, you must accept these little things, and not think of returning money for them, for I do not set up for a factor or general agent. As for the fantastic debt of £15, I'll think you were dreaming, and not trouble myself seriously to attend to you. My bad Latin you properly correct; but *natales* for *nates* was an inadver-

[1] The letter here refers to several articles and books which Lamb promised to send to Coleridge.—T.

tency: I knew better. *Progrediri*, or *progredi*, I thought indifferent, my authority being Ainsworth. However, as I have got a fit of Latin, you will now and then indulge me with an *epistola*. I pay the postage of this, and propose doing it by turns. In that case I can now and then write to you without remorse; not that you would mind the money, but you have not always ready cash to answer small demands, the *epistolarii nummi*.

Your "Epigram on the Sun and Moon in Germany" is admirable. Take 'em all together, they are as good as Harrington's. I will muster up all the conceits I can, and you shall have a packet some day. You and I together can answer all demands surely: you, mounted on a terrible charger, (like Homer, in the Battle of the Books,) at the head of the cavalry: I will lead the light horse. I have just heard from Stoddart. Allen and he intend taking Keswick in their way home. Allen wished particularly to have it a secret that he is in Scotland, and wrote to me accordingly very urgently. As luck was, I had told not above three or four; but Mary had told Mrs. Green, of Christ's Hospital! For the present, farewell: never forgetting love to Pipos[1] and his friends.

C. LAMB.

LETTER XLIV.] Oct. 23rd, 1802.

I read daily your political essays. I was particularly pleased with "Once a Jacobin:" though the argument is obvious enough, the style was less swel-

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[1] A nickname of endearment for little Hartley Coleridge.—T.

ling than your things sometimes are, and it was plausible *ad populum*. A vessel has just arrived from Jamaica with the news of poor Sam Le Grice's death. He died at Jamaica of the yellow fever. His course was rapid, and he had been very foolish; but I believe there was more of kindness and warmth in him than in almost any other of our schoolfellows. The annual meeting of the Blues is to-morrow, at the London Tavern, where poor Sammy dined with them two years ago, and attracted the notice of all by the singular foppishness of his dress. When men go off the stage so early, it scarce seems a noticeable thing in their epitaphs, whether they had been wise or silly in their lifetime.

I am glad the snuff and Pi-pos's books please. "Goody Two Shoes" is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; and the shopman at Newberry's hardly deigned to reach them off an old exploded corner of a shelf, when Mary asked for them. Mrs. Barbauld's, and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. Barbauld's books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape* of *knowledge;* and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learnt that a horse is an animal, and Billy is better than a horse, and such like; instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales, which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you

had been crammed with geography and natural history!

Hang them!—I mean the cursed Barbauld[1] crew, those blights and blasts of all that is human in man and child.

As to the translations, let me do two or three hundred lines, and then do you try the nostrums upon Stuart in any way you please. If they go down I will bray more. In fact, if I got or could but get £50 a year only, in addition to what I have, I should live in affluence.

Have you anticipated it, or could you not give a parallel of Buonaparte with Cromwell, particularly as to the contrast in their deeds affecting *foreign* States? Cromwell's interference for the Albigenses, Buonaparte's against the Swiss. Then religion would come in; and Milton and you could rant about our countrymen of that period. This is a hasty suggestion, the more hasty because I want my supper. I have just finished Chapman's Homer. Did you ever read it? it has the continuous power of interesting you all along, like a rapid original, more than any; and in the uncommon excellence of the more finished parts goes beyond Fairfax or any of 'em. The metre is fourteen syllables, and capable of all sweetness and grandeur. Cowper's blank verse detains you every step with some heavy Miltonism; Chapman gallops off with you his own free pace. Take a simile for example. The council breaks up—

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[1] Lamb used to speak pleasantly of this lady and of Mrs. Inchbald, as "The Two Bald Women."—F.

"Being abroad, the earth was overlaid
With flockers to them, that came forth; as when of frequent bees
Swarms rise out of a hollow rock, repairing the degrees
Of their egression endlessly, with ever rising new
From forth their sweet nest; as their store, still as it faded, grew.
And never would cease sending forth clusters to the spring,
They still crowd out so; this flock here, that there, belabouring
The loaded flowers. So," &c., &c,

What *endless egression of phrases* the dog commands!

Take another, Agamemnon wounded, bearing his wound heroically for the sake of the army (look below) to a woman in labour.

"He, with his lance, sword, mighty stones, pour'd his heroic wreak
On other squadrons of the foe, whiles yet warm bloom did break
Thro' his cleft veins; but when the wound was quite exhaust and crude,
The eager anguish did approve his princely fortitude.
As when most sharp and bitter pangs distract a labouring dame,
Which the divine Ilithiæ, that rule the painful frame
Of human childbirth, pour on her; the Ilithiæ that are
The daughters of Saturnia; with whose extreme repair
The woman strives to take the worst it gives;
With thought, it *must be, 'tis love's fruit, the end for which she lives;*
The mean to make herself new born, what comforts will redound:
So," &c.

I will tell you more about Chapman and his peculiarities in my next. I am much interested in him.

Yours ever affectionately, and Pi-Pos's.

C. L.

LETTER XLV.] Nov. 4th, 1802.

Observe, there comes to you, by the Kendal waggon to-morrow, the illustrious 5th of November, a box, containing the Miltons, the strange American Bible, with White's brief note, to which you will attend: *Baxter's Holy Commonwealth*, for which you stand indebted to me 3*s.* 6*d.*; an odd volume of Montaigne, being of no use to me, I having the whole; certain books belonging to Wordsworth, as do also the strange thick-hoofed shoes, which are very much admired in London. All these sundries I commend to your most strenuous looking after. If you find the Miltons in certain parts dirtied and soiled with a crumb of right Gloucester, blacked in the candle, (my usual supper,) or peradventure a stray ash of tobacco wafted into the crevices, look to that passage more especially: depend upon it, it contains good matter. I have got your little Milton, which, as it contains "Salmasius," and I make a rule of never hearing but one side of the question, (why should I distract myself?) I shall return to you when I pick up the *Latina opera*. The first Defence is the greatest work among them, because it is uniformly great, and such as is befitting the very mouth of a great nation, speaking for itself. But the second Defence, which is but a succession of splendid episodes, slightly tied together, has one passage, which, if you have not read, I conjure you to lose no time, but read it: it is his consolations in his blindness, which had been made a reproach to him. It begins whimsically, with poetical flourishes about Tiresias and other blind worthies, (which still are mainly interesting as displaying his singular mind, and in what degree poetry entered into his daily soul, not by fits and impulses,

but engrained and innate,) but the concluding page, *i.e.* of *this passage*, (not of the *Defensio*,) which you will easily find, divested of all brags and flourishes, gives so rational, so true an enumeration of his comforts, so human, that it cannot be read without the deepest interest. Take one touch of the religious part:—"Et sane haud ultima Dei cura cæci — *we blind folks*, I understand it; not *nos* for *ego*) — sumus; qui nos, quominus quicquam aliud præter ipsum cernere valemus, eo clementius atque benignius respicere dignatur. Væ qui illudit nos, væ qui lædit, execratione publica devovendo; nos ab injuriis hominum non modo incolumes, sed pene sacros divina lex reddidit, divinus favor: nec tam *oculorum hebetudine* quam *cœlestium alarum umbrâ* has nobis fecisse tenebras videtur, factas illustrare rursus interiore ac longe præstabiliore lumine haud raro solet. Huc refero, quod et amici officiosius nunc etiam quam solebant, colunt, observant, adsunt; quod et nonnulli sunt, quibuscum Pyladeas atque Theseas alternare voces verorum amicorum liceat,

> "Vade gubernaculum mei pedis.
> Da manum ministro amico
> Da collo manum tuam, ductor autem viæ ero tibi ego."

All this, and much more, is highly pleasing to know. But you may easily find it; and I don't know why I put down so many words about it but for the pleasure of writing to you, and the want of another topic.

Yours ever, C. Lamb.

To-morrow I expect with anxiety S. T. C.'s letter to Mr. Fox.

LETTER XLVI.] March 20, 1803.

Mary sends love from home.

Dear Coleridge,—I do confess that I have not sent your books as I ought to have done; but you know how the human free will is tethered, and that we perform promises to ourselves no better than to our friends. A watch is come for you. Do you want it soon, or shall I wait till some one travels your way? You, like me, I suppose, reckon the lapse of time from the waste thereof, as boys let a cock run to waste; too idle to stop it, and rather amused with seeing it dribble. Your poems have begun printing; Longman sent to me to arrange them, the old and the new together. It seems you have left it to him; so I classed them, as nearly as I could, according to dates. First, after the Dedication, (which must march first,) and which I have transplanted from before the Preface, (which stood like a dead wall of prose between,) to be the first poem; then comes "The Pixies," and the things most juvenile; then on "To Chatterton," &c.,—on, lastly, to the "Ode on the Departing Year," and "Musings,"—which finish. Longman wanted the Ode first, but the arrangement I have made is precisely that marked out in the Dedication, following the order of time. I told Lnogman I was sure that you would omit a good portion of the first edition. I instanced several sonnets, &c.; but that was not his plan, and, as you have done nothing in it, all I could do was to arrange 'em on the supposition that all were to be retained. A few I positively rejected; such as that of "The Thimble," and that of "Flicker and Flicker's wife," and that *not* in the manner of Spenser, which you

yourself had stigmatised—and the "Man of Ross," —I doubt whether I should this last. It is not too late to save it. The first proof is only just come. I have been forced to call that Cupid's Elixir, "Kisses." It stands in your first volume, as an Effusion, so that, instead of prefixing The Kiss to that of "One Kiss, dear Maid," &c., I have ventured to entitle it "To Sara." I am aware of the nicety of changing even so mere a trifle as a title to so short a piece, and subverting old associations; but two called "Kisses" would have been absolutely ludicrous, and "Effusion" is no name, and these poems come close together. I promise you not to alter one word in any poem whatever, but to take your last text, where two are. Can you send any wishes about the book? Longman, I think, should have settled with you; but it seems you have left it to him. Write as soon as you possibly can; for, without making myself responsible, I feel myself, in some sort, accessory to the selection, which I am to proof-correct; but I decidedly said to Biggs that I was sure you would omit more. Those I have positively rubbed off, I can swear to *individually*, (except the "Man of Ross," which is too familiar in Pope,) but no others—you have your cue. For my part, I would rather all the *Juvenilia* were kept—*memoriæ causâ*.

Robert Lloyd[1] has written me a masterly letter, containing a character of his father. See how different from Charles he views the old man! (*Literatim*): "My father smokes, repeats Homer in Greek, and Virgil, and is learning, when from business, with all

[1] Brother of Charles Lloyd. —H.

the vigour of a young man, Italian. He is, really, a wonderful man. He mixes public and private business, the intricacies of disordering life with his religion and devotion. No one more rationally enjoys the romantic scenes of Nature, and the chit-chat and little vagaries of his children; and, though surrounded with an ocean of affairs, the very neatness of his most obscure cupboard in the house passes not unnoticed. I never knew any one view with such clearness, nor so well satisfied with things as they are, and make such allowance for things which must appear perfect Syriac to him." By the last he means the Lloydisms of the younger branches. His portrait of Charles (exact as far as he has had opportunities of noting him) is most exquisite:—"Charles is become steady as a church, and as straightforward as a Roman road. It would distract him to mention any thing that was not as plain as sense; he seems to have run the whole scenery of life, and now rests as the formal precision of non-existence." Here is genius I think, and 'tis seldom a young man, a Lloyd, looks at a father (so differing) with such good nature while he is alive. Write—

I am in post-haste, C. LAMB

Love, &c., to Sara, P., and H.

LETTER XLVII.] April 13th, 1803.

My dear Coleridge,—Things have gone on better with me since you left me. I expect to have my old housekeeper home again in a week or two. She has mended most rapidly. My health too has been better since you took away that Montero cap. I have left

off cayenned eggs and such bolsters to discomfort. There was death in that cap. I mischievously wished that by some inauspicious jolt the whole contents might be shaken, and the coach set on fire; for you said they had that property. How the old gentleman, who joined you at Grantham, would have clapp'd his hands to his knees, and not knowing but it was an immediate visitation of God that burnt him, how pious it would have made him!—him, I mean, that brought the influenza with him, and only took places for one—an old sinner; he must have known what he had got with him! However, I wish the cap no harm for the sake of the *head it fits*, and could be content to see it disfigure my healthy sideboard again.

What do you think of smoking? I want your sober, *average*, *noon opinion* of it. I generally am eating my dinner about the time I should determine it.

Morning is a girl, and can't smoke—she's no evidence one way or the other; and Night is so evidently *bought over*, that he can't be a very upright judge. May be the truth is, that *one* pipe is wholesome; *two* pipes toothsome; *three* pipes noisome; *four* pipes fulsome: *five* pipes quarrelsome, and that's the *sum* on't. But that is deciding rather upon rhyme than reason. . . . After all, our instincts *may* be best. Wine, I am sure, good mellow, generous Port, can hurt nobody, unless those who take it to excess, which they may easily avoid if they observe the rules of temperance.

Bless you, old sophist, who next to human nature taught me all the corruption I was capable of knowing! And bless your Montero cap, and your trail,

(which shall come after you whenever you appoint,) and your wife and children—Pipos especially.

When shall we two smoke again? Last night I had been in a sad quandary of spirits, in what they call the evening; but a pipe, and some generous Port, and *King Lear*, (being alone,) had their effects as solacers. I went to bed pot-valiant. By the way, may not the Ogles of Somersetshire be remotely descended from King Lear? C. L.

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